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ABSTRACT

The future role and responsibilities of the trustees and regents of postsecondary education in the U.S. in the last quarter of the twentieth century is examined. The thesis of this essay is that the governing boards of higher education, if they are prepared to rise to the opportunities, have a more important role in the years ahead than at any time in this century. It is important for trustees to be clear about their responsibilities, not only because they have too often neglected them in the past, but also because under pressures of changed conditions some of them are assuming new shapes. What might be called the standard responsibilities include the selection, retention and termination of appointment of the officer, attention to financial controls and financial support, the physical assets of maintenance of the institution, and the development of good public relations. In these four areas trustees need to step up their activities in degree rather than in kind. Once directions have been agreed upon, it is the responsibility of governing boards to examine progress and to assess institutional performance. Only strong boards that command public respect for the kind of job they are doing can effectively champion institutional autonomy. And finally, trustees must evaluate their own performance. To do what comes naturally is no longer good enough. A superior performance will require careful thought about what the board does and how effectively it does it. (Author/PG)

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THE FUTURE OF TRUSTEESHIP

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*A Report to The Commission on the
Future of The Association of Governing
Boards of Universities and Colleges*

The Role

& Responsibilities of

College & University Boards

by John W. Nason

A WORD OF ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Until the angry students of the late Sixties roamed the campuses looking for the center of power, the American college trustee enjoyed an honorable obscurity. Now the financial peril of the Seventies, a far worse menace to higher education than unruly students, has turned even more attention his way. What is he doing? What is he supposed to be doing? Can he help? If so, how? College governance, once a neglected area of research in higher education, has suddenly become the focus of a considerable scholarship. Much of the comment has been critical, but it is significant that no one has seriously offered an alternative to the American system of lay trusteeship by which 35,000 volunteer citizens — men and women — accept ultimate responsibility for 2,600 colleges and universities.

In response to the need for a comprehensive analysis and statement of suggestions to enhance the effectiveness of governing board performance, to help trustees come to grips with their roles and responsibilities, the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB) in 1972 established the Commission on the Future. Twelve distinguished trustees and educators were appointed to the Commission, chaired by Mr. Edwin S. Hewitt, former chairman of the AGB Board of Directors. The Commission's work was made possible by a generous grant from the Carnegie Corporation, supplemented by the personal interest and

support of Mr. Elliott Donnelly, former trustee of Lake Forest College, and by donations from other individual trustees.

A series of activities was planned under the leadership of Dr. John W. Nason as Director of Studies. Dr. Nason brought to the Commission the benefit of a long and outstanding career in education, in which he served as president of Carleton and Swarthmore colleges and as a trustee of Vassar College.

Recognizing the need to account for the real or perceived differences in governance practices among the major types of colleges and universities, seven authorities were invited to develop essays on what they considered to be the most pressing problems bearing on the responsibilities of the governing boards of public community colleges, private liberal arts colleges, state colleges, public universities, private universities, and statewide governing and coordinating agencies. These essays will be published in *AGB Reports* between February and December, 1975:

- "A Plan for Survival: The Role and Function of Trustees of Private Universities in a Time of Crisis," by Hugh Calkins [*AGB Reports*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (January/February, 1975)]

- "The Occasional Search for the Public Interest: State Coordination of Postsecondary Education and the Higher Learning," by Harold L. Enarson, and "External Governance in Higher Education: Bane or Boon?" by

In addition to the help of the 115 conferees who participated in the seminars, and the seven authors of the essays, Dr. Nason relied upon an empirical study conducted by the Research Triangle Institute, *The Effective College and University Board: A Report of a National Survey of Trustees and Presidents*. Following final revisions, Dr. Nason's report was submitted to the AGB Commission on the Future. The Commission officially accepted the report on October 23, 1974, commending it as "extremely helpful in contributing to greater awareness of the primary issues surrounding trustee roles and responsibilities." The Board of Directors and the AGB staff concur in this evaluation.

Among the many individuals who gave freely of their time and talents during the conduct of the Commission's activities, my predecessor, Dr. J. L. Zwingle, deserves special credit for initiating and advising the Commission so ably. In his ten years as the Association's chief executive, Dr. Zwingle was able to build what was once a volunteer organization consisting of only 90 governing boards of state universities and colleges into an effective program which now serves more than 14,000 members of the boards of 960 colleges and universities of all types. The contributions of the various materials produced by the AGB Commission on the Future, including this significant report, give testimony to his sound judgment and leadership.

Mr. Edwin S. Hewitt, chairman of the AGB Commis-

Logan Wilson [*AGB Reports*, Vol. 17, No. 5 (March/April, 1975)]

- "The Liberal Arts College Trustee in the Last Quarter of the Twentieth Century," by Atherton Bean [*AGB Reports*, Vol. 17, No. 6 (May/June, 1975)]

- "State College and University Trustees, Requiem or Renaissance?" by Homer D. Babbidge, Jr. [*AGB Reports*, Vol. 17, No. 7 (July/August, 1975)]

- "Community and Junior College Boards of Trustees," by Joseph P. Cosand [*AGB Reports*, Vol. 17, No. 8 (September/October, 1975)]

- "Governing Boards in Major Public Institutions," by R. W. Fleming [*AGB Reports*, Vol. 17, No. 9 (November/December, 1975)]

In the late spring of 1974, Dr. Nason conducted a series of regional conferences for presidents, board chairmen, and trustees. Each was convened by a prominent trustee-citizen, to whom we acknowledge our special thanks and appreciation: in Boston, Mr. Vernon R. Alden, trustee of Brown University; in Atlanta, Mr. Henry L. Bowden, chairman of the board of Emory University and trustee of Clark College; in Minneapolis, the Honorable Elmer L. Andersen, chairman of the board of the University of Minnesota; and in Pasadena, Mr. R. Stanton Avery, trustee of the California Institute of Technology.

sion on the Future, died on December 21, 1974. An exemplar of the intelligent and dedicated volunteer trustee, he served on the board of Grinnell College since 1957; he was a director of AGB since 1965 and chairman of the board in 1972-73. He participated in the final decisions regarding the publication and distribution of this report and related materials resulting from almost two years of extensive study and discussion. His friends and colleagues on the AGB Board of Directors and Commission on the Future join with the staff in acknowledging their sense of loss and appreciation for Mr. Hewitt's many contributions to the aims and purposes of AGB.

In adding my personal appreciation to Dr. Nason and to the members of the AGB Commission on the Future for doing such a splendid job of clarifying the special functions performed by the nation's volunteer trustees, I wish also to renew the long-standing commitment of the AGB Board of Directors and staff to continue to improve the Association's programs to serve more effectively governing, coordinating, and advisory boards of American higher education.

Robert L. Gale

President, Association of
Governing Boards of
Universities and Colleges

PREFACE

Early in 1973 the Carnegie Corporation of New York made a grant to the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB) for a study of effective trusteeship. Convinced that the American pattern of lay trustees would continue, that many boards were not doing an adequate or effective job, and that the responsibilities of trustees would become more complex and more important, the AGB Commission on the Future "entered into this assignment with an open mind and a generous mandate tied neither to the past nor to present activities, but instructed to assess the roles trustees now play and will play in the future in both member and non-member institutions and to recommend a program of assistance."

Invited to direct the study, I began work in June 1973. Factual material about trustees and interpretations of their role — both of which are increasing in volume — had to be collected and appraised. Two independent lines of inquiry were begun.

One consisted of a systematic national survey of governing boards to determine so far as possible what actual factors had a favorable or unfavorable effect on arriving at board decisions, what characteristics trustees considered necessary for effective board operation, and what forms of assistance would enable trustees to be more effective. Dr. J. A. Davis, Director of the Center for Education Research and Evaluation of the Research Triangle Institute, assisted by Steve A.

Batchelor, directed the survey. Questionnaires were sent to the presidents and trustees of 282 colleges and universities distributed among seven types: large state universities, private universities, state colleges, private liberal arts colleges, black colleges, community colleges and private junior colleges. The full scope and findings of the survey are set forth in Dr. Davis' report, *The Effective College and University Board: A Report of a National Survey of Trustees and Presidents*.¹

A second line of inquiry focused on a series of essays in which thoughtful and experienced representatives of the different categories of institution were invited to explore and predict the future role and responsibilities of trustees. Surveys tend to reveal existing conditions; we asked our authors to give us some clues regarding the shape of things to come. (These essays are listed in the Word of Acknowledgment, above.)

A third step was to test certain conclusions tentatively reached as a result of these activities at a series of four regional conferences held in the late spring of 1974. Invitations went to the president, the chairman of the board, and one other trustee (selected by the chairman or president) of a diverse group of colleges and universities in different parts of the country. At each conference, lasting a day and a half, discussions ranged over the responsibilities of trustees, the problems they would face in the next decade, factors of effectiveness, and ways of helping trustees to under-

stand the importance of their job and to perform in an effective manner.

stand the importance of their job and to perform in an effective manner. policies for multiple campuses, some of which they may never see, and lay down guidelines which often necessarily ignore variations in local situations. These boards also vary, in all probability to a greater extent than do the boards of individual institutions, in the range of responsibilities they assume.

The responsibilities and effectiveness of the trustees and regents of these systems deserve a special study of their own — more thorough than either the time or the resources of the present investigation allowed. Such a study might well include an examination of the likely changes in authority and in the making of decisions resulting from the establishment in nearly every state of coordinating councils or commissions embracing all private as well as public institutions of postsecondary education. In the absence of such an exploration the present report necessarily concentrates on boards governing individual colleges and universities. This is where we have had the greatest experience and where we can learn lessons affecting the nature of trusteeship.

In addition to the support of the Carnegie Corporation, without which this study of trustees would not have been possible, I am indebted to Richard H. Sullivan for his encouragement and counsel, to J. L. Zwingle who knows all there is to know about trustees and regents, to Robert L. Gale, president, and Richard T. Ingram, associate director of AGB, who kept me headed

1. Copies are available from the office of the Association of Governing Boards (One Dupont Circle, Washington, D.C. 20036), at a price of \$5.00 per copy.

2. Eugene C. Lee and Frank M. Bowen, *The Multicampus University: A Study in Academic Governance* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1971), one of the many excellent reports prepared under the aegis of the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education. The quotation is taken from a resume which appeared in *AGB Reports*, Vol. 14, No. 5 (February, 1972), p. 2.

stand the importance of their job and to perform in an effective manner.

In this report I present the most important conclusions resulting from these various lines of inquiry. While the study was conceived and its general directions set by the AGB Commission on the Future under the chairmanship of Edwin S. Hewitt, trustee of Grinnell College and member of the AGB board of directors, the interpretations and recommendations which follow are entirely my own.

One important aspect of the governance of higher education does not receive in this report the attention it deserves. The shift in recent years to multi-campus and statewide systems in the governance of public institutions has been a major phenomenon. "Forty percent of all students in higher educational institutions and three-fourths of the students in public universities now attend schools which are parts of multi-campus institutions," wrote Lee and Bowen in 1971.² We have not yet had time to assess the full impact of this shift which has eliminated the governing boards of some individual institutions, transformed them into purely advisory bodies in others, or substantially reduced their authority in yet a third group.

The members of the board of a system share many of the problems and responsibilities of trustees of individual colleges and universities. But they also face a new and more complex set of obligations as they set

in the right direction, and to the AGB staff without whose help I would not have survived. To the Commission on the Future of the Association of Governing Boards I am grateful for the opportunity of conducting this study. In a long career in the academic world I have been teacher, administrator, and trustee by turns. This study reflects all three points of view.

John W. Nason
Keene, N.Y.
November 1974

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MAJOR RESPONSIBILITIES OF TRUSTEES

IN YEARS AHEAD

STANDARD EXPECTATIONS

- A. Selection, retention and termination of appointment of the president
- B. Financial support and management
- C. Maintenance of physical plant
- D. Public relations

THE NEW DEMANDS

- E. Clarification of purposes
- F. Assessment of performance
- G. Bridge between community and campus
- H. Preservation of institutional independence
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INTRODUCTION & SUMMARY

1. While the growth and impact of statewide and multi-campus systems of governance are referred to here and elsewhere in this report, the special problems and responsibilities of the members of such boards are not here examined. They deserve to be the focus of a separate study.

2. In *The University as an Organization*, edited by James A. Perkins for the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co. 1973), there are four interesting chapters comparing the university to a business corporation, a government bureau, a philanthropic foundation, and to other organizations. The businessman-trustee

will find the first of these by Ralph M. Besse particularly helpful. See also the pamphlet by Charles C. Abbott, former dean of the University of Virginia Business School, entitled *Trusteeship in "Profit Corporations" and "Nonprofit Organizations"*, published by The Cheswick Center (17 Dunster St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138, 1974).

This is an examination of the role and responsibilities of the trustees and regents of postsecondary education in the United States in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

The conclusions of this essay are based on my interpretation of the current educational scene. Forces at work within our society since World War II have so altered the traditional pattern of higher education that colleges and universities are confused about their mission, uncertain of their methods, and bewildered by the conflicting pressures both from within and from without. Various disruptive forces — the decline in respect for authority, uncertainty as to purpose, the increasing politicization of the campus, external intervention with its demand for accountability, the growth of multi-campus systems — have weakened, where they have not rendered ineffective, the conventional system of governance.¹ This negative backdrop to the positive conclusions of this essay is developed in the two sections immediately following.

The governance of postsecondary education, including both the structures and the processes by which decisions are made and carried out, is a complex affair.² This is not a treatise on governance as such, but an analysis of the present and future role of governing boards. That means in this country boards composed largely of laymen. Such boards are a characteristic, though by no means unique, aspect of American higher

education. Some foreign universities (like some American businesses) are governed almost entirely by those on the inside; and in many countries control of higher education is vested in a central government bureau. The concept of laymen, or outsiders, having an important voice in college and university affairs has had a checkered career. To some it is anathema. For others it is the major hope of salvation for our institutions.

Some would argue that trustees have never lived up to their proper responsibilities and that the conflicts and uncertainties of the present merely underscore the need for a much higher quality of input. Others would argue that colleges and universities in this country are currently undergoing a period of traumatic change, perhaps the most traumatic in their history. The traditional model of governance will not work, and therefore the traditional role of the trustee is no longer effective.

What are the prospects? Is the heyday of the trustee over or is he on the verge of a renaissance? *It is the thesis of this essay that the governing boards of higher education, if they are prepared to rise to the opportunities, have a more important role in the years ahead than at any time in this century.*³

It is important for trustees to be clear about their responsibilities, not only because they have too often neglected them in the past, but also because under the pressures of changed conditions some of them are as-

suming new shapes. What might be called the standard responsibilities include the selection, retention, and termination of appointment of the chief administrative officer, attention to financial controls and financial support, the physical assets of maintenance of the institution, and the development of good public relations. In these four areas trustees need to step up their activities in degree rather than in kind.

In other areas, however, the level of trustee activity needs to be such that the difference can properly be called one of a kind. In the face of multiple and sometimes conflicting purposes, of divided faculty loyalties, of competing student expectations, there is no other group than the trustees, both deeply concerned and yet above the fray, to insist on the clarification of mission. Once directions have been agreed upon, it is the responsibility of governing boards to examine progress and to assess institutional performance. This is one way of discharging their responsibility to protect the independence and the integrity of their institution. Pressures from the outside are increasing. Only strong boards which command public respect for the kind of job they are doing can effectively champion institutional autonomy. Educational programs are a mix of requirements of intellectual disciplines on the one hand, the needs of society on the other. A nation in social motion will not leave educational patterns at rest, and the interpretation of social needs to academic ex-

3. The process of selection of new members deserves the most careful attention. It is a constant and exacting job for existing trustees and administration. There should be opportunities for faculty and students to make recommendations. Private institutions are in a relatively fortunate position in that they can readily change their processes of selection. Public colleges and universities are restricted by charter or legislative statute, but the use of blue ribbon nominating committees would minimize political influence.

4. Size of board and frequency of meetings tend to be in inverse ratio. For the most part public boards tend to be small, private boards large. Public boards often meet monthly; private boards three or four times a year. To be effective each board must work out its own formula and not be satisfied with what some antique bylaw prescribes.

5. Continuity of service is a great asset, especially with the board member who makes an outstanding contribution. The hazards of age and of diminishing returns, however, favor a mandatory retirement age and a mandatory limitation on the number of consecutive years any member may serve. This is the only sure way of maintaining a fresh stream of board members and of eliminating gracefully those who no longer make a contribution.

6. Conventional wisdom favors the establishment of a committee system to divide up the work of the board,

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3. Note the trenchant comment by Robert K. Greenleaf in an article on "The Foundation Trustee": "My interest in this subject grows out of a larger concern for the whole gamut of our voluntary (non-governmental) institutions and for the changing expectations of the times that make imperative a radical advance in their service to society—all of them, universities, businesses,

churches, social services, philanthropies. . . . As I see it, there is no other way that as few people can raise the quality of the whole American society as far and as fast as can trustees and directors of our voluntary institutions, using the strength they now have in the positions they now hold." *Journal of Philanthropy*, Vol. 14, July/August 1973, p. 30.

perts will be an increasing function of trustees. To the extent that higher education is moving into an era of governance by conflict rather than by consensus, rights become important and challenges to authority more prevalent. It would become intolerable to take all local issues to the public courts; in the last analysis governing boards must serve as courts of last appeal. And finally trustees must evaluate their own performance. To do what comes naturally or what has been habitual is no longer good enough. A superior performance — and that is what is needed — will require careful thought about what the board does and how effectively it does it.

The study on which this report is based included an inquiry into what circumstance or what combination of conditions make some boards effective and others not. Eleven different but related factors deserve careful thought and planning.

1. A new sense of responsibility and commitment on the part of individual members is basic.

2. Diversity rather than uniformity of outlook adds strength to the board. It also enhances the board's legitimacy. While I do not recommend the inclusion of students or faculty from within the institution (very recent graduates and faculty members from other institutions can be valuable), it is important that their views be considered. A number of ways to achieve this are suggested.

but the public institutions with smaller boards, and particularly the community colleges, seem to function quite well without the usual complex of committees. A case can be made for the substitution of ad hoc for standing committees as a more effective use of trustee time, energy and interest. The executive committee, so central to most board operations, should be watched carefully to make certain that it does not become an inner board usurping the functions of the board as a whole.

7. The effectiveness of any board depends in large part on the leadership of the chairman. He plays an essential role in educating fellow trustees, in setting them an example, in guiding board discussion to wise decisions.

8. Board effectiveness depends also on the president and on the relations between the president and the board. The wise president keeps his board fully informed — about mistakes as well as successes and about whatever problems require immediate or long range solution. Complete candor, mutual respect, and a willingness to support the president (unless the situation calls for a drastic change) are ingredients in effective governance.

9. Ought board meetings to be open or closed? Many representatives of public institutions find the mandatory requirement of open meetings a diminution of effectiveness. In terms of healthy discussion preliminary

to wise decisions much can be said for closed sessions. In terms of public acceptability, however, a case can and is being made for openly arrived at decisions. Some sensitive issues are clearly better discussed *in camera*, but the experience of many institutions, private as well as public, in holding open sessions of the board or of board committees has not justified the fears held in advance. In the current egalitarian climate it is unlikely that the demands for open meetings will decrease. Public boards will have little choice. Private boards may find that some accommodation to the demands will put them in a stronger position than dogged resistance.

10. There are three levels of trustee knowledgeability. The effective trustee must clearly know a great deal about his institution, both to guide it and to defend it. He must also know something about trends in higher education and what is happening elsewhere. This provides a necessary perspective on the local scene. And at least some trustees must have an awareness of the currents of change in society, all of which will ultimately affect what happens in colleges and universities.

11. Just as board effectiveness begins with the responsibility and commitment of individual members, it ends with a sense of achievement. Board effectiveness is no exception to the rule that nothing succeeds like success. The collective sense of a common commit-

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ment, of competence in coping with problems, of helping to guide the progress of the institution create good board *morale*.

There are in the neighborhood of 35,000 men and women serving as trustees of colleges and universities across the country. Many work extraordinarily hard at what has become a more and more demanding task. The final justification for their efforts and the satisfaction in making them lie in the central importance of the contribution they make to postsecondary education and thereby to the future of American society. ■

4 THE CURRENT ACADEMIC SCENE: CONFUSION & UNCERTAINTY

THE TRADITIONAL PATTERN

For nearly two and a half centuries higher education in this country grew slowly and changed little. Then came the dramatic changes triggered by the Civil War, the Morrill Acts and an era of national expansion. By the end of the nineteenth century American higher education enjoyed substantial agreement regarding its goals and structures. In spite of the pressures of steady growth in the first part of this century this consensus continued until World War II. Although tax supported, i.e. public, universities had been established in every state for the benefit of any high school graduate who could qualify, the percentage of college and university students within their age group remained small. Private institutions still dominated the scene, setting the pace and pattern for the public institutions. Higher education was still viewed as a privilege for the affluent or the exceptionally ambitious who constituted an elite group within society.¹

The central mission of the college and university was the preservation, enhancement and transmission of knowledge. There were other goals, such as the services to society provided by the land grant colleges and the training of professionals (law, medicine, engineering, school teaching, and the like). Colleges and universities were *communities* which recognized certain common purposes, which shared values, and which

1. In contrast to the present time when 10,200,000 college and university students represent just under 38% of the 18-24 age group, in 1900 237,600 students were only 2.29% of that age group. By the beginning of World War II student enrollment had grown to 1,404,000 or 8.4%.



accepted a common structure of authority. Students were there to learn and faculty to teach. Final authority resided in trustees and regents who occasionally exercised it in despotic fashion, but who for the most part delegated responsibility for the educational program of the institution to the president, restricting themselves largely to control over property and financial matters and to the hiring and firing of their agent, the president. He in turn gradually released more and more responsibility for the academic program to the faculty, who by World War II had the major voice in decisions regarding curriculum, standards of teaching, requirements for graduation, qualifications for admission, selection and promotion of their own members.

Stated this simply, the picture looks more harmonious than it actually was. Many of the cross-purposes of the present confused scene had their beginnings in this earlier period — the growth of organized research, the multiplication of community services, the rise of the junior college. In retrospect, however, and in contrast to our present uncertainties and divisiveness, it remains true that out of the nineteenth century there had evolved a traditional pattern of higher education, widely accepted, reasonably clear about its mission, governed by consensus, and with each institution a community of shared values and recognized roles, including the role of trustees.

CONTEMPORARY MISSIONS

World War II precipitated a second major convulsion in American higher education. For three decades post-secondary education has been experiencing a series of stresses resulting from the changed and still changing nature of our society and its consequent demands on education. The results have been confusion and uncertainty about goals, procedures, values and governance. Consider, for example, the new missions either accepted by or demanded of our educational institutions.

One is the organized, systematic, extensive search for new knowledge. The nature of our scientific society requires constant accretions of new knowledge, and modern technology has made possible, indeed desirable, large scale research involving elaborate and expensive equipment, conducted by research teams. Such research is financed largely by government, foundations and industry. It comprises a significant part of the operations, both in terms of budget and of faculty time, of every major university. While it may appear to be merely an extension of the enhancement of knowledge resulting from the scholarship of "old-fashioned" professors, the differences in scope and character are so great as to constitute differences of kind rather than of degree.

A second is the provision of a wide variety of services to society. All education is a form of service, whether it be turning out better carpenters or better doctors or better citizens. But a new era began with the establishment of the land grant colleges under the Morrill Act of 1862. The extraordinary success of American agriculture is one of the results. Stimulated by this example other segments of society have turned to the universities and colleges for assistance in increasing numbers. Wherever there are problems — military, industrial, societal, governmental — the resources of the universities are being called upon. The explosion in recent years of two-year community colleges is yet another facet of service to society. Most community colleges are community based, local both in clientele and in program. Their purpose in no small part is to provide the skilled technicians and para-professionals needed in the community and region.

A third function, namely the provisions of post-secondary education for everyone, is less widely agreed to. The spectacular increase in the number of high school graduates proceeding to college (as well as the growth in opportunities for those long out of high school) is one of the uncomfortable phenomena of our time. Have we reached a peak or will the percentage continue to grow? Writing in 1970 Martin Trow said: "We are now seeing what was a privilege that became a right transformed into something very near to an oblig-

ation over purposes, loss of a sense of community, uncertainty about the proper form of governance and the role of trustees.

Instruction is central to the traditional mission of the college, all other functions being ancillary. For the modern university large scale research and service to society (the two being often interdependent) tend more and more to supplant teaching as the major focus. Which is the proper mission of the institution? So far as a sense of mission is concerned, there is no contradiction in asserting both functions, provided one is clear about the place each holds within the total system.

As we consider other alleged functions of higher education, however, agreement on goals becomes more difficult because the goals themselves are in certain respects incompatible. Colleges and universities have struggled for centuries to achieve a reasonable degree of autonomy, meaning by autonomy freedom from outside dictation of subject matter, methods of teaching, standards of excellence, and freedom to seek truth. Complete autonomy would be absurd, just as complete outside control would be intolerable, but any mission which breaches autonomy as here defined creates a conflict of function within the institution. Service to society is a possible case in point. Such services may be provided entirely on the university's terms (e.g. education of doctors), but frequently they are set by



2. Martin Trow, "Reflections on the Transition from Mass to Universal Higher Education," *Daedalus*, Vol. 99, No. 1 (Winter, 1970), pp. 3-4.

3. In this section and in the following I am indebted to James A. Perkins' perceptive analysis in his essay, "Organization and Functions of the University" in the report, already referred to, which he edited for the Carnegie Commission entitled *The University as an Organization*. See also his *Stafford Little Lectures at Princeton University entitled The University in Tran-*

sition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966).

ation for growing numbers of young men and women."² Whether this prove to be true or not, the presence of large numbers of high school graduates whose families have no background of college or university experience and who are not sure why they are there and whether they really want to be, generates a whole set of new problems and constitutes a major challenge to higher education.

Finally, in the 1960s there surfaced a demand by the more radical students and by some faculty that colleges and universities epitomize in their own structure and practices the ideal society. The slogan of participatory democracy, the focusing of the curriculum on contemporary social and political issues, the insistence that the institution's relations to students, faculty, employees and investments be determined by value judgments, all reflect a moral demand for a better world and for the university as its exemplar. The high tide of moral enthusiasm of the 1960s seems to have receded. It may not reach the same extremes again, but it will in time flow back, and in the meantime some uncomfortable questions about purpose remain stranded on the academic beach.³

CONFUSION & UNCERTAINTY

The consequences of the new demands upon higher education have been confusion and uncertainty — con-

fusion over purposes, loss of a sense of community, uncertainty about the proper form of governance and the role of trustees. The trend toward universal higher education is another instance. A policy of open admissions not only denies to faculty, administration and trustees the freedom to select the student body; if it is taken seriously, it necessitates changes in academic standards and in course content. For those who would shape the curriculum and behavior of the university according to specific moral ideals, the conflict with the objective pursuit of truth is even more pronounced. To sum up, different groups emphasize different goals, not all of which can comfortably coexist within the same institution.

Confusion over purpose is not the only casualty, however. The older sense of academic community, while it survives in the smaller liberal arts colleges and to a considerable extent in the newer community colleges, has suffered considerable erosion in the large universities. Multiple purposes generate multiple loyalties. The traditional teacher centered his loyalty on the institution that employed him and on the education of his students. The modern professor who is research-oriented is concerned with the judgment of his intellectual peers. His standing in his field is more important than his standing in his college. If he is successful, he will be able to attract funds from outside sources and thus become largely independent of the institution which happens to be his base. On the campus his as-

sociations are more likely to be with his research team or with the institute or center which he has carved out for his own domain than with his department or college.⁴

This situation is made worse by a system of rewards which bears unevenly on different individuals. We prize research so highly that in most universities the chief rewards go to the men and women who have made a name for themselves in scholarship. Even the colleges which profess to honor teaching are often inconsistent in promotion and salary. The divisive consequences do not promote a sense of community.

Equally divisive is disagreement over standards and values. There was a time when faculty knew what kind of students to expect — farm boys, city kids, the nation's intellectual elite — and organized their classes and requirements accordingly. Today we argue for some sort of higher education for everyone and then disagree profoundly on what that means for our institutions. Academic infighting over standards of admission and of graduation are bad enough. Let the young Turks challenge the orthodox view of academic objectivity, urging, for example, that the institution refuse a platform for certain views or sell all investments in any way connected with the military or undertake some controversial social service project in a nearby community, and what the outside world once thought of as a peaceful community of students and teachers begins to ap-

4. Irwin T. Sanders, chairman of the Department of Sociology of Boston University, presents a vivid picture of contemporary destructive forces at work in his article, "The University as a Community," in *The University as an Organization*.

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proximate Thomas Hobbes' state of nature where every man's hand is against every other.

If any one clue is to be sought for the loss of a sense of community, it is to be found in the growth of collective bargaining in higher education. How far it will spread no one knows, but it is growing faster than anyone expected a few years ago. Friction between faculty and administration is a widespread and probably inevitable phenomenon. To institutionalize an adversary relationship between faculty and administration, however, is to indicate the extent to which the sense of a common enterprise and a community of values and responsibilities has disappeared. ■

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GOVERNANCE: Confusion Worse
Confounded

1. Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, *The Governance of Higher Education: Six Priority Problems* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1973), p. viii. The quotation from Stephen Bailey comes from his essay "A Comparison of the University with a Government Bureau," in *The University as an Organization*, pp. 127-28. Both books make important contributions.

2. Myles L. Mace, *Directors: Myth and Reality* (Cambridge: Harvard Business School, 1971). Abbott, *Trusteeship in Profit and Non-profit Organizations*.

3. See especially Mace's article, "The President and the Board of Directors," *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (March/April, 1972). See also for a similar position John A. Groobey's

article, "Making the Board of Directors More Effective," *California Management Review*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (Spring, 1974). I cannot resist quoting a paragraph from an editorial in the May 22, 1971, issue of *Business Week*, p. 90: "If corporate management is to survive in anything like its present form, directors will have to take on new responsibilities. They must make

sure that corporate goals are consistent with the larger goals of U.S. society. And they must monitor management to see that it pursues these goals effectively, including the basic objective of earning a reasonable income and keeping the company out of the bankruptcy courts."



THE MODEL THAT ONCE WORKED

Stephen Bailey, vice president of the American Council on Education, has written: "To paraphrase Emerson, a university is a kind of 'standing insurrection.' And the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education notes that campuses have been viewed by some critics as 'ungovernable anarchies,' although the members conclude that they are 'both governable and worth governing well.'" No doubt many trustees over the past hundred years have shared these sentiments as they tried to understand and to deal with academic communities which seemed to have their own peculiar mystique, where faculty (i.e. employees) insisted on behaving like partners, and where students were more or less in constant rebellion against the regulations which they had tacitly accepted by applying for admission. The frustrations for those accustomed to a clear hierarchical system must have been enormous.

The similarities and differences between corporate directors and college trustees make an interesting study. Myles L. Mace, professor of business administration at the Harvard Business School, finds the performance standards of directors less clearly defined than those of trustees, whereas Dean Abbott of the University of Virginia Business School argues that trustees are much less restricted in the exercise of their authority.² The myth, according to Mace, is that direc-

tors (1) serve as advisers to management, (2) provide an element of discipline or "corporate conscience," and (3) take action in crisis situations such as the sudden death of the chief executive officer or the continuing decline in profitability of the company. The reality is that, with notable exceptions, they are largely yes-men to the chief executive officer. The reforms which Mace recommends sound very much like some of the proposals in this report for trustees.³

But the fact remains that the model of governance which evolved in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did work. It did not always work well, and both the machinery and method of working varied with different kinds of institutions. The regents of state universities arrived at their position by different routes from those of the trustees of private colleges. They had different obligations and were held responsible in different ways. Yet the main features of the traditional model are readily recognizable — a model that directed and managed the growth of what was probably in size and complexity the most extraordinary system of higher education in the world.

The nineteenth century was the era of trustee dominance. It was the century when most of our institutions of higher education, public and private (with the exception of the two-year colleges), were founded, and those who founded colleges and universities were inclined to control them. After all, they had established the institu-

tion to perpetuate the true faith, whether that of some religious group or the zeal of the democrat who believed in free education at public expense. Toward the end of the century we entered a period when strong university presidents largely dictated the course of their institutions — a parallel perhaps to the great captains of industry who dominated the business world. Slowly and gradually in the nineteenth century, more rapidly after the establishment of the American Association of University Professors in 1915, faculty assumed more control over decisions affecting the educational content and procedures of their institutions. In theory trustees retained absolute authority while delegating much of their power to presidents, and in theory presidents retained their power and influence in spite of the delegation of almost all control over academic questions to the faculty.

Harold L. Hodgkinson, writing in 1971, provides a description, which is part parody and part truth, of this model of governance. "In higher education, 'classic-tall' means power is concentrated in the governing board but delegated to a strong chief executive. While he may allow the faculty to make certain decisions, it is always at his pleasure, and he can revoke their decisions immediately if he disapproves. Students, who are seen as passive recipients of the curriculum of the 'classic-tall' campuses, are naturally passive in their relationship to the governance of the institution as well.

ward the end of the era marked by World War II it was growing perilously thin. It functioned in different ways on different campuses. The greater the prestige of the institution, the more faculty dominated the areas of major policy. In the black colleges the pattern of dominant presidents has persisted. Among community colleges, relative latecomers to the educational scene, governing boards play a major role in policy determination and even to an uncomfortable degree in actual administration.

The authority and effectiveness of lay governing boards varied enormously. One set of critics, of which Thorstein Veblen was an eloquent spokesman,⁶ argued for their abolition on grounds that they were at best an unnecessary nuisance and at worst a serious menace to the integrity of the academic world. Others would keep them as window dressing, helpful perhaps in fund raising, since they are viewed as ineffectual rubber stamps on all important matters. All too often they were, and there is an uncomfortable edge to the criticism that many trustees betrayed their basic trust through ignorance or indifference. In the midst of current confusion regarding their role, however, it is easy to overlook the contribution they have made to higher education in this country. They were, when all is said and done, the protectors and supporters of the colleges and universities of which they were the legal trustees. They cherished and nurtured the well-being of individual in-



4. Harold L. Hodgkinson, *College Governance—The Amazing Thing is that it Works at All*, Report No. 11 of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education (Washington, D.C.: Educational Resources Information Center/Higher Education, 1971), p. 9.

5. Bailey, "Comparison of University with Government Bureau," p. 128.

6. Thorstein Veblen, *The Higher Learning in America: A Memorandum on the Conduct of Universities by Business Men*, American Century Series (1918; New York: Hill and Wang of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1957).

7. E. D. Duryea, "Evolution of University Organization," in *The University as an Organization*, p. 22.

8. Note the position of a group of Princeton University students in 1968: "The issue is not whether the trustees are doing their job well. The issue is that there is no justification for such a group of men controlling the destiny of an institution and a community in which they have no legitimate place. The University is a community of students and faculty, not businessmen." *The*

Governing of Princeton University, Final Report of the Special Committee on the Structure of the University (1970). Cited in James Harvey, "College Trustees," *ERIC Research Currents*, June, 1971; reprinted in *AGB Notes*, Vol. 2, No. 7, (September, 1971).

The on-campus authority structure resembles an equilateral triangle with the president at the top. Patterns of initiation and communication as well as decision-making are from the top downward. The budget is usually considered a confidential document; deans and department chairmen usually are familiar with their own allocations, but have little knowledge about the rest of the budget. Salaries represent also a confidential understanding between the president and each staff member. Faculty and students have no contact with the board of trustees at all, and no intelligence can get from these 'subordinates' to the trustees except through the good graces of the president. There was a time in this century when the 'classic-tall' model was predominant in American higher education. Indeed, it still exists in far greater numbers than one would at first suspect. Analysis of long-term trends suggests, however, that its days are numbered, at least as far as this particular cycle of social change is concerned.⁴

It was a model of governance whose hierarchical lines of authority were gradually being obliterated, in fact if not in theory, by the diffusion of decision-making, to the point where Stephen Bailey can refer to "the vast agglomeration of academic baronies that constitutes most large institutions of higher education in the United States."⁵ What made it work was *consensus* — consensus about goals, methods, roles, authority and values. The consensus was never perfect, and to-

stitutions. They served as buffers as well as bridges between the institution and the public. Professor E. D. Duryea has said it well: "Little attention is given, unfortunately, to the uniquely significant role of the governing board in this country as the agency that both has protected internal autonomy and intellectual freedom and has served as a force to keep institutions relevant to the general society. This history badly needs doing. Despite occasional intrusions into internal affairs and matters related to academic freedom, the governing board has served as a point of balance for that essential dualism between institutional and academic autonomy and public accountability which has characterized American higher education. Current forces pressing for greater internal participation on the one hand and increased public control on the other need tempering by the experience of the past in this connection."⁷

THE FORCES OF DISRUPTION

The accelerating changes in society and in higher education since World War II are destroying the old model of consensus. I say "are destroying" rather than "have destroyed" because governance is in a state of transition. In such a state people cling to old and familiar patterns and processes in the face of disruptive forces requiring different models. Let us look at some of these disruptive forces, for it is important to under-

stand them if we are to appreciate the significance of the contemporary role of trustees.

A. Decline in authority. The temper of the times is egalitarian, and with egalitarianism goes a decline in respect for traditional forms of authority. This has been a prominent and disturbing aspect of our "youth culture." Disrespect for elders, for the experience of others, for constituted authority is a widespread current phenomenon. It is manifest in attitudes toward government, social conventions, industrial structure as well as education; and since education is primarily concerned with young people, it is not surprising that challenges to authority have been particularly virulent in this area.

No social system or organization can function without some structure of authority. So the question is posed: what authority or whose authority? Where the traditional justification of authority is discarded, the tendency is to turn to some form of participation. Hence the appeal of the slogan of participatory democracy. However we view this position, the legitimacy of authority is central to any system of governance. Since trustees can no longer assume their legitimacy, they can ignore the process of legitimization only at peril to their own effectiveness and to the well-being of their institutions.⁹

B. Confusion of mission. The management of any enterprise is, or ought to be, a reflection of its goals

variety of experiments in new forms of governance.

C. Politicization of the campus. An alternative to consensus, perhaps the only alternative, is conflict, and conflict in government is dealt with in political terms. Black students see the campus as a platform on which to assert their demands for equality and for cultural separatism. The women's rights movement, reinforced by HEW, is using colleges and universities as instruments for greater equality in admission, in enjoyment of opportunities, and in employment. The tidal wave of new students in the 1960s brought demands for different academic content, different standards, different goals. Student power brutally challenged the hitherto accepted pattern of control and rocked the system from Berkeley to Cambridge. The recognition that eighteen is a legitimate age for young people to participate in national, state and local politics is an open invitation to students to exert political influence on campus.

So also with faculty who increasingly view their delegated authority over academic policies as their inalienable right and who accordingly challenge the role of trustees. In addition their preoccupation with different functions of the university and their divided loyalties create factions which vie with one another for power. The growth of collective bargaining is the most vivid evidence of conflict rather than consensus. The slowly gained recognition of partnership among fac-

9. John J. Corson, "Perspectives on the University Compared with Other Institutions," in *The University as an Organization*, pp. 156-58.

10. Alan Pifer, President of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, in his 1971 Annual Report entitled *The Responsibility for Reform in Higher Education* lists 13 types of activity which

people have expected from colleges and universities in the period since World War II. These range from liberal education to certification for various kinds of employment to continuing education for adults to commercialized entertainment (football and basketball).

11. As the members of the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education say in their report entitled *Governance of Higher Education*, p. 2: "Governance may now be entering a new period marked by continuing conflict rather than by the informal consensus that characterized it in the recent past. If so, it will need to undergo substantial restructuring to meet the strains of

the conflict." This thoughtful and balanced treatment of the subject should be read by every trustee.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

and functions. Democratic government differs from totalitarian, the administration of an army from that of a religious denomination. The governance of higher education evolved in response to its traditional mission. That mission, as we have seen, is today in flux, with various groups within the college and university working at cross purposes to one another.

It may well be, as so thoughtful a critic as Corson contends, that the lack of clearly stated purposes is inherent in the nature of an institution of higher education.⁹ The discovery and transmission of knowledge is so individual an exercise and so varied in its manifestations, he argues, that it cannot be stated in the specific terms appropriate to the operations of a business enterprise. The different and sometimes conflicting interests of the various groups composing the institution — in contrast to the more single-minded approach of the government bureau and the philanthropic foundation — make even more difficult a sharp definition of goals.

The problem, however, is much more acute. The goals themselves are in conflict, and where not in conflict there is still such a variety and surfeit that we are asking more of our educational institutions than they can reasonably be expected to perform.¹⁰ Add to this the conflict in loyalties of the different constituencies and indeed of divisive conflicts within the constituencies themselves, and it is no wonder that we find a great

ulty, administration and governing boards is giving way to an adversary relation. The professional is becoming an employee.

Perhaps the trends of the past fifteen years will slow down or even reverse themselves. But they will leave a residue with which governance must cope. The break-up of the old collegial spirit into factions — factions within the student body, within the faculty, between students and faculty, between both and the administration — and the increasing recourse to courts to settle disputes within the university amount to the politicization of the campus.¹¹

D. External intervention. One of the major points made in the Carnegie Commission's *Governance of Higher Education* emphasizes the invasion of academia from the outside. "External authorities are exercising more and more authority over higher education, and institutional independence has been declining. The greatest shift of power in recent years has taken place not inside the campus, but in the transfer of authority from the campus to outside agencies."¹²

Why? One reason is the far greater concern and involvement of the public in higher education. When such education was viewed as the privilege of a small and self-selected group, the general public was largely indifferent to what took place within the ivied gates. Today with over fifty percent of high school graduates proceeding to some form of postsecondary education,



their parents, aunts and uncles have a real concern both for what is taught and for what it costs.

The politicization of the campus breeds conflict, and those who feel that their rights or interests are jeopardized appeal to some higher authority. State legislatures are beginning to pass laws on issues once considered to be matters of internal jurisdiction. Students and faculty are turning more and more frequently to the courts for the protection of what they consider to be their rights.¹¹ And, as I shall point out in the next section, the mounting costs of education, particularly in the public sector, are creating a demand by taxpayers for outside control of expenditures.

The great land grant universities have wrestled for the past hundred years with the problem of intervention from that segment of American society which they were created to serve. Since World War II much of American higher education, private as well as public, has engaged in public service. The grants for large scale research have brought controls as well as funds. Since much of the money has come from federal agencies, the general public through such agencies and through Congress which creates and sustains them has come to have a vested interest in the performance of faculty and the stance of the institution. The impact has varied with the amount of outside sponsored research. It affects the large research universities far more than the small liberal arts colleges.

Surely there must be ways of making higher education more "efficient," people argue, and so legislatures, audit bureaus, the governor's office seek to control expenditures in the interests of economy and efficiency, and sometimes on the grounds of ideology. Budget control which leaves the institution free to use its funds as regents, administration and faculty think best may or may not create serious problems, depending on the level at which the institution is funded. But line-item budget control can effectively remove the major decisions and administration of an institution from the campus to the state capital.

Financial accountability is proper and inevitable. Its absence would be irresponsibility. It is, however, a concept which can be lethal or beneficial, and the difference depends upon the way it is applied. The danger is the loss of essential autonomy.

F. Multi-campus systems. The past decade has seen an extraordinary growth of multi-campus governing boards and statewide coordinating boards. Created in response to the need for a more rational ordering of the educational resources of a state, they have proved to be a mixed blessing. The transfer of authority for major policy decisions to a systems board has reduced the amount of institutional infighting with state legislators over budgets. It has also reduced or eliminated the responsibility for institutional policies vested in the governing boards of individual institutions. While the

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13. The decision of Judge Gerhard Gesell of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia (July 30, 1974) in the Sibley Hospital case may have a profound influence on the responsibility of college and university trustees. In this case Judge Gesell found that the defendants (the trustees of a private hospital) were guilty of mismanagement through failure adequately to super-

vised the investment of the hospital's funds and through failure to disclose their connections with banking and other institutions doing business with the hospital.

14. It is only fair to report that some commentators take a diametrically opposite view. Henry G. Manne sees "the last sporadic fights for the vestiges of control left in the hands of trus-

tees . . . now being waged," and he concludes that the governing board "seems well on its way to near-impotence." Cf. "The Political Economy of Modern Universities," *AGB Reports*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (October, 1972). James A. Perkins in the final chapter of *The University as an Organization* argues that governing boards will become less powerful, since they will be

caught between conflicting positions. If they serve primarily as the agents of society, they will lose authority on the campus; if they become agents of campus constituencies, they will lose their standing with the state and society. On the other hand, note the judgment of the members of the Carnegie Commission: "But the board, in our judgment, continues to be an essential

But even the latter get embroiled in a different way. Research in the development of oleomargarine was once the focus of violent controversy respecting the role of a land grant college in a major dairy state. How much more controversy is likely to be generated as institutions engage in research and remedial programs in areas of great social, economic and political sensitivity? Nor can the colleges escape. As they modify their programs to meet student demands for more "socially relevant" subjects or combinations of subjects, they too find themselves not only involved with outside groups and forces, but involved in what are basically controversial issues. Controversy, it need hardly be noted, breeds conflicting demands.

E. Demand for accountability. If one reason for outside intervention is the increased public interest in what goes on within the campus and the increasingly controversial character of what goes on, a second reason is the current demand for accountability. Let us limit it for the present purposes to financial accountability. The cost of private higher education is staggering. The appropriations to state universities and colleges represent the largest item in state budgets, reaching as much in some states as twenty-five percent of the total. The era of great expansion is over. Enrollments are leveling off. Demands for other social services are competing with the needs of state universities. Taxpayers are reluctant to dig deeper into their pockets.

statewide coordinating boards do not yet have mandatory authority over the private institutions included in their network, their influence and power are growing. Indirectly through the allocation of state scholarship funds, for example, or through subsidies to expand private rather than public facilities (e.g. medical schools), they can put considerable pressure on the private sector to conform to statewide planning programs. These are major changes in the governance of higher education. They are part of the disruption of the traditional model and an important factor in the conclusion of the members of the Carnegie Commission quoted above.

ROLE OF TRUSTEES

My purpose in the preceding analysis has been to lay the groundwork for three propositions central to the role of governing boards: first, that the traditional model of governance is inadequate to the circumstances of the present and future; second, that a period of confusion and uncertainty is a time of great opportunity since the patterns of the future can be deliberately shaped; and third, that governing boards will need to play a major role in shaping the destiny of higher education. It follows that trustees and regents will be more important in the last quarter of this century than they have been for the last hundred years.¹⁴

institution in higher education. It is not just the best of several unsatisfactory alternatives. It has, in the United States, provided generally good governance for higher education. . . . The board is essential, in part, also by default—no other mechanism can provide for governance so well, not the state, not the faculty, not the students, and not the faculty and students together."

Governance of Higher Education, p. 32.

15. In *The Trusteeship of Colleges and Universities* Morton A. Rauh concludes his careful examination with the comment: "My prediction is that the common pattern of benign but uninvolved stewardship is in for a change. While the underlying concept of the execution of a trust in the public interest, upon which the institution of lay trusteeship is based, will in all probability

continue for a long time. There will be major changes in the manner in which the board discharges its obligation. One would like to hope that trustees will be wise enough to accommodate to these changes." (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1969), pp. 151-52.

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The precise role of governing boards will vary from one type of institution to another, and each board will need to work out its own formula and mandate. The regents of tax supported universities and university systems face demands for accountability from the general public, from the state legislature, and from the state accounting office. While it is not true, as sometimes asserted, that the trustees of private institutions are accountable to no one, they have a much greater freedom to act as they think best. Their problem, to take one example, is not to justify professorial salaries in relation to other salaries of public officials, but to find the funds to maintain a competitive salary scale. The preservation of a reasonable degree of institutional autonomy, to cite another example, is far more difficult for the regents of a statewide system than for the trustees of a private university, even though the latter may have branch campuses. The community college trustee operates in a setting of public regulation; the junior college trustee faces the same kind of problems as his four-year colleague. One observation, however, applies to all. The contemporary scene requires of all trustees not merely a better performance along familiar lines, but new kinds of wisdom, courage, patience, sensitivity and understanding as they chart new courses for their institutions and develop new patterns for their governance.¹⁵ ■

14 MAJOR RESPONSIBILITIES OF TRUSTEES IN YEARS AHEAD

The analysis up to this point has sketched in very broad terms the current educational scene. If that analysis is correct, it points to the conclusion that trustees could and should play a strategically important role in the next few years. Whether they will or not, will depend on how they measure up to the new, as well as the old, responsibilities which the present situation requires of them. It is time to take a closer look at those responsibilities.

Colleges and universities are corporations established by charter (in the case of most private institutions) or constitutional provision or some form of legislative statute (in the case of most public institutions). The charters and statutes assign to governing boards the legal responsibility to hold, control and manage the assets and the operations of the institution in trust for the church or private group, the state, the municipality, the county or school district which is responsible for its creation and support. Since all institutions, private as well as public, must be chartered by the state and enjoy certain privileges and exemptions by permission of the state, all governing boards hold a mandate on behalf of the public welfare and in very broad terms are responsible to the society which makes their institutions possible.

The legal mandate of governing boards, either expressly stated or implied, is virtually absolute. Trustees and regents are by law held responsible for the entire

operation and performance of their institution. In actual practice, as noted earlier, trustees have over the years delegated most of their powers to administration and faculty, retaining for themselves primary responsibility for financial affairs and physical property. Some state boards of regents are still required by statute to approve all faculty appointments and promotions; and the trustees of community colleges, perhaps because of their newness and close ties with school districts, tend to exercise closer supervision of all operations, educational as well as financial and physical, than is today true of most four-year institutions.

The literature on higher education is replete with lists of trustee responsibilities. Many of them were compiled with the traditional model of governance in mind. The Association of Governing Boards has attempted to make available some of the more recent and radical treatments of the subject. But one wonders at times how widely these have been read or whether their impact has been fully appreciated. At the risk of repetition I propose to review trustee responsibilities once again and to combine them into a catalogue of ten major responsibilities, four of which are standard requirements, while six are either new or are older expectations with new dimensions.

1. There is an old story variously ascribed to Daniel Willard, chairman of the board, and to Isaiah Bowman, president, of Johns Hopkins University, to the effect that a governing board has only two decisions to make. The first is whether to support the president, in which case the members can adjourn. The second, in the event the answer to the first question is no, is how and

where to find his successor.

2. An excellent presentation of this entire area of board responsibility is to be found in the booklet, *The Selection of College and University Presidents*, by Joseph F. Kauffman, professor of educational administration at the University of Wisconsin/Madison, and former president of Rhode Island College,

(Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges, 1974).

3. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

4. See the provocative (and sometimes depressing) analysis in Michael D. Cohen and James G. March, *Leadership and Ambiguity: The American College President*, Report Prepared for the Carnegie Commission

on Higher Education (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1974). Robert K. Greenleaf argues eloquently, if not altogether convincingly, in *The Institution as Servant and in Trustees as Servants* (Cambridge, Mass.: Center for Applied Studies, 17 Dunster Street, 02138, 1972; 1974), that the role of chief executive officer, so central to the American concept of organization, is

STANDARD EXPECTATIONS

A. Selection, retention and termination of appointment of the president. This has long been recognized as one of the primary responsibilities of governing boards. Indeed, it has occasionally been argued that it is the primary responsibility.¹ The president is the administrative agent of the board, selected presumably for his educational leadership as well as administrative skill. Since the board has the legal responsibility for the total health of the institution, the performance of the president as their surrogate is of crucial importance.

All too often in the past boards have focused on the selection of the president, ignoring their further responsibility for his performance. To the extent that this is true, the haphazard approach to the selection of new presidents is all the more surprising. It is incumbent on trustees to establish clear procedures for selection as well as criteria for the evaluation of the president's performance.² The president is the administrative agent of the board, selected presumably for his capacity for educational leadership as for administrative — and often political — skill. Since the board has the legal responsibility for the total health of the institution, the selection and performance of the right man or woman as their surrogate is of crucial importance.

All too often after selecting the president boards tend to overlook their responsibilities to nurture him

and to evaluate his performance. "Given the substantial investment a governing board makes in finding a president," writes Kauffman, "it is simply good management for the board to conserve this important resource. Leadership is a scarce and precious asset that should not be taken for granted."³ The chief executive officer of a college or university is the focal point for competing demands and conflicting pressures; he reigns by persuasion, not by coercion, and he needs the backing of the board.⁴

It is also the obligation of governing boards to evaluate the performance of the president. If they are to take this seriously, they need to establish criteria of evaluation which can be agreed upon by both parties. The current trend toward term appointments requires evaluation before the end of the term and the decision on renewal. There are, however, disadvantages in this system, and many boards and presidents may prefer a more flexible arrangement. However it is played, the evaluation should not be casual or based on fuzzy criteria. Where performance is unsatisfactory and shows little likelihood of improvement, trustees should reach the decision to change administrations before a crisis blows up in their faces. A quietly arranged departure is kinder to the individual and far better for the institution. But it demands time, energy, and a kind of loving concern on the part of trustees.

The situation with multi-campus and statewide

boards is more complicated. It is difficult to see how genuine continuous support for top administration, apart from the selection of the top administrative officer, can be provided by a board of regents with responsibility for many separate campuses or for several distinct institutions. Where the system results from merger, as is usually the case, individual institutions sometimes retain their original boards with some residue of their original powers. In such situations, even though final authority resides in the system board, local boards can serve a valuable function in recommending the choice of president and in guiding and monitoring his performance. This is one argument for preserving within a system local boards which are more than window-dressing or advisory bodies and which retain a genuine voice in governance.

B. Financial support and management. Higher education is currently in severe financial trouble, and the prudent management of finances has always been considered a major responsibility of trustees. Education, like the GNP, has grown accustomed to growth. The last quarter century witnessed an explosive increase in enrollments, capital assets and operating budgets. The rate of increase has taken a dramatic downturn, and educational forecasters are predicting not only a much slower growth in enrollment for the balance of the century, but an actual decline in enrollment in the 1980s. The resulting competition for students among private

paying than to the staffing responsibility, partly because it is the function that boards of trustees perform less well, and partly because it is the lever by which trustees properly raise fundamental questions as to the mission of private universities. In the internal allocation of responsibilities in a university, it is bill-paying which is unquestionably the trustees' business. If cash flows out faster than it flows in, the trustees are the whistle-blowers, who insist that the condition be diagnosed and the remedy found. If the remedy requires more energetic fund-raising, some trustees must solicit with imagination and enthusiasm. If the remedy requires political action, some trustees must become politicians. If the remedy requires the university to redefine its mission, some trustees must help the administration and faculty to think through the new roles. In my view, all three of these remedies will be required in most private universities if the bills are to be paid through the end of the decade, and most boards of trustees, as presently constituted, are barely capable of and interested in administering the first remedy, and quite incapable of and disinterested in administering either of the other two."⁴

C. Maintenance and expansion of physical plant. This is an inheritance from an earlier period, and it might properly be treated as one aspect of the trustees' concern for finances. No doubt the businessman-trustee felt that his experience was of particular value in this

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an impossible one, inefficient at best and corrupting at worst. He proposed the substitution of a top leadership team, one of whose members will be *primus inter pares*. He argues that it is the responsibility of the governing board to select all the members of the team, not just the one who is *primus*, and to design the top administrative structure. I do not propose to de-

bate the merits of this novel proposal as contrasted with the traditional hierarchical pattern. But trustees and regents would do well to study carefully Greenleaf's arguments which document the problems of presidential leadership, his need for help, and the failure of trustees to assume the amount of responsibility for insuring the good administration that society has a right to expect.

5. Note, however, the masterful analysis of the factors of supply and demand in education in Howard R. Bowen's address to the 1974 National Conference on Trusteeship, available in a special booklet published by the Association of Governing Boards (*The Effective Use of Resources: Financial and Human*). Pointing out that a projected increase by the year 2000 in full-time

equivalent enrollment of 10,500,000 students would still be significant growth. Bowen concludes: "I have tried to show that the potential market for higher education is in the long run very great. This is true whether one considers demographic trends, growth of the service economy, uses of leisure time, or manpower issues. The higher education industry might well double or tre-

institutions with escalating tuition fees and public colleges with recently expanded plant facilities is likely to have disastrous effects. Taxpayers are voicing considerable opposition to increased appropriations for public institutions, some of which are already experiencing a leveling off of enrollments, while others are facing a decline in students.⁵

In the long run it is the responsibility of trustees and regents to balance income and expenditures, to reconcile resources with programs. They are in a better position than any other group to preserve the financial health of the institution. They are outside the daily operations which often encourage a myopic view. They stand enough apart to have a certain perspective. They are aware, or should be, of the trends and pressures of society which bear upon the college or university. In public universities they are closer to and more involved in the affairs of the institution than the governor, the budget bureau and the committee on education of the state legislature. Theirs is the final responsibility for the solvency of the institution.

Let me sum up a familiar subject with the charge of a thoughtful critic. Hugh Calkins, member of the Harvard Corporation, quotes Nathan Pusey, former president, as saying that the responsibilities of a member of the Corporation were to make sure that the university was properly staffed and that the bills were paid. Calkins proceeds: "I shall devote more attention to the bill-

area at a time when colleges were staffed with ministers and teachers without much business experience, and perhaps he has clung to a responsibility for the physical problems because he has delegated so much responsibility for educational problems where he felt on less familiar ground. Be that as it may, most colleges and universities today have officers competent to handle construction and maintenance, power plants and parking lots. The involvement of trustees and regents, either directly or through buildings and grounds committees, constitutes a confusion of policy with administration. Furthermore, it distracts attention from the more important issues which trustees should be considering. Everyone has views on where the new building should go, what style of architecture it should represent, and what type of contract should be negotiated. Board meetings are often cluttered with details which would be better left to the business officer. I include this area of responsibility only because it has been a traditional one.

D. Public relations. The interpretation of educational institutions to a variety of publics has been and continues to be an important trustee responsibility. Catalogues, promotional pamphlets, public speeches by deans and presidents can do much to explain what goes on inside a campus to those who observe it from the outside. But they are unlikely to persuade the hostile or disarm the critical. It is hard for many people to

understand that the university serves society not only by conserving and transmitting the culture of the past, but also as a critic of that culture. They resent the autonomy of the university and demand that its teaching conform to their notions of what is right and proper.

A trustee should work as persistently and persuasively as possible to correct what he believes to be the weaknesses or errors of his institution — work, that is, from within — but once a position or policy has been taken, he should resign if he cannot live with it or be prepared to support it. That support should take the form of spiking rumors, correcting misunderstandings, refuting misstatements, explaining the problems of the university, interpreting its premises and principles. If he is a trustee, it is his institution to protect and defend, to rejoice in, to admire and to support.

He does this in part by his stature in the community. He stands for something, and he must be prepared to put his reputation at the service of the institution. This subtle factor of prestige is the reason so many colleges and universities have sought the most prominent men and women in the community to serve on their boards. To be effective, however, service must be more than lending a name. It involves a willingness to work, to understand and, when necessary, to go to bat. The state university regent may need to calm an irate, and possibly misinformed, legislator. The community college trustee may have to defend the right of some stu-

peril of losing all sense of direction. Is the purpose to provide a liberal education or a technical-vocational education or both? If both, then in what proportions? What should be the ratio of undergraduate to graduate instruction? Is the mission teaching or research? If the latter, how many faculty are expected to do research, and how much of their compensated time are they expected to devote to it? Some colleges aim at intellectual excellence, attracting students from all over the country. Some are distinctly regional in their recruitment, others primarily local. Some colleges and universities see themselves as having primarily a social mission, though they are increasingly reluctant to admit it or at least to state it so baldly. They want their graduates to have a kind of social polish and the right kind of friends; fraternity and sorority life plays a central part. If a college is founded and controlled by a religious group, what makes it distinctive — its restrictions on students, its choice of faculty, its requirements for religious observance?

Most small private colleges in this country started life with fairly distinct goals and characteristics. The trend in recent decades has been toward homogenization, the less prestigious emulating the more prestigious. Does this really serve the needs of society? Former normal schools across the country have struggled to become state colleges, and now many of them struggle once more to become state universities. Is this a wise

ble in size during the balance of this century and a totally new kind of society might be created in which the level and the depth of education and the richness of culture would surpass that ever before achieved or even imagined." p. 18.

6. Hugh Calkins, "Plan for Survival: The Role and Function of Trustees of Private Universities in a Time of

Crisis," an essay written for the Association of Governing Boards (xeroxed, 1974), pp. 1-2; to be published in *AGB Reports*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (January/February, 1975).

7. As elaborated in the section on The Forces of Disruption, above.

8. Note the incisive comments of J. L. Zwingle in his chapter on "Governing

Boards," in the *Handbook of College and University Administration*, edited by Asa S. Knowles (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1970), pp. 2-24: "The trustee of the two-year college . . . deals with an interesting long-range problem: whether to maintain the open door to the average student, whether to emphasize so-called terminal courses, or to become more

selective, emphasizing transfer of two-year graduates to four-year institutions. Here is the crux of the debate over the community college: whether it rightly belongs to the public school concept or to the concept of higher education. . . . Although the distinction has outraged some people, it is a major factor in determining the mood of the board and administration

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dent group to invite a controversial speaker. The private college trustee must be prepared to ask for private support. The generating of trust in the institution is a tough but honorable responsibility. I shall have more to say on this subject in discussing the preservation of institutional independence.

THE NEW DEMANDS

E. Clarification of purposes. Every college and university catalogue contains near the beginning a statement of the institution's mission. In most cases these statements are long on rhetoric and short on specific content. The goals are to develop the intellect and character of students or to increase the sum total of human knowledge or to serve society. Corson may be right that the articulation of specific purposes is particularly difficult for educational institutions,⁷ but the fact that it is difficult should not be misinterpreted as proof that it is not necessary.

We have seen in an earlier section that one of the disruptive forces in higher education today is confusion over purposes. Institutions cannot be all things to all people. The tendency of society to turn to higher education for help whenever a new problem needs to be resolved is flattering and, for the system as a whole, perhaps not altogether unreasonable. But each individual institution must decide what its mission is, at

use of public monies? Calkins in the essay already referred to makes an interesting distinction between those private universities with a non-regional research mission and those with a regional higher education mission. If his analysis is anywhere near the mark, it is a distinction which trustees cannot afford to ignore. Or take the two-year community college. Ought its program to be terminal or preparatory or both?⁸

"The first thing an institution needs to do to start on a conspicuously higher course," writes Greenleaf,⁹ "is to state clearly where it wants to go, whom it wants to serve, and how it expects those served directly, as well as society at large, to benefit from the service. Unless these are clearly stated, an institution cannot approach its optimum performance." Francis C. Pray, management consultant, suggests that one way of taking a fresh look at mission is to ask what difference it would make if the institution in question ceased to exist. Would any significant group of students seeking education be inconvenienced? Would the surrounding community be any the worse off?¹⁰ Or one could ask, what does institution A contribute that is not contributed by institutions B, C, D and others?

The clarification of purpose or purposes is a job for faculty, administration and trustees. Faculty alone, besides divided interests and loyalties, tend to have the parochial view characteristic of any profession. We would not want to leave the definition and dimensions

—not to say the public. There is a consequence for the type of faculty, the length of faculty service, the type of facilities developed, and the academic atmosphere. With the present commitment to pluralism in higher education, this dilemma may never be resolved—at least, on grounds of principle. A certain degree of tension will probably continue to be felt

in communities, in faculties, and among administrators and trustees (regents) over this issue."

9. Greenleaf, *Trustees as Servants*, p. 25.

10. See Francis C. Pray, "Trusteeship for Colleges and Universities," (New York: Council for Financial Aid to Education, 1964). Note also his comment in a

privately printed essay, "The State of the Art of College Trusteeship: A Situation Review" (Arlington, Va.: Frantz & Pray Associates, 1500 Wilson Blvd., 22209, 1974): "Seldom is there serious discussion [by trustees] or adequate time for study given to the task of defining or redefining the social goal of the institution, its basic purposes, or its general strategy for ac-

complishment. The board of the future will not have the luxury of avoiding these problems which demand hard straight thinking, detailed and complete staff work, objective analysis and evaluation by experienced counsellors, and a willingness to be objective about the sacred cows and mythologies which may characterize the governance pattern. In their role as trus-

of health care entirely to the medical profession. Administrative officers, many of whom have made a major contribution to a definition of direction and mission, are often too preoccupied with the business of keeping the institution on a level keel to be able to stand off to chart more accurately future courses. Trustees alone lack the professional knowledge and experience essential to any realistic clarification of goals.

The articulation of purpose in specific and operational terms is not likely to be made unless governing boards demand it and are prepared to take an active part in formulating the statement.¹¹ In a situation so much in flux as the present the purposes of an institution ought to be reviewed periodically. How often? That will vary with the institution and the circumstances. But it is the board's responsibility to see to it that there is a clear statement in writing to which every trustee can honestly subscribe and that every faculty member will recognize as setting the directions of the institution.

F. Assessment of performance. This is inherent in the legal responsibilities of trustees. All governing boards pay lip service to it. Some have taken it seriously; many have not. The health of higher education in these troubled times will depend in large part on the extent to which trustees and regents commit their time and energy to this responsibility. To what extent is the university living up to its stated mission? Is it attracting the

kind of students it professes to help? Does the quality of instruction match the need? Is the administration really doing the best possible job?

It is obvious that trustees are the appropriate people to examine into the first and the last of these questions. Having had a hand in formulating the goals, trustees cannot, or at least ought not, ignore the way they are or are not realized in the programs and operations of the institution. Goals are not self-realizing, and all men, even academic administrators, are fallible. The wise board will keep a helpful, but sharp, eye on how the administration is doing and how well the purposes of the institution are being achieved.

But ought trustees to get involved in the educational program? Admissions, curriculum, instruction are academic matters — the proper concern of the faculty who are the professionals. Indeed, they are the concern of the faculty and administration, but not their exclusive concern. In an address at the Institute for College and University Administrators at Harvard in the summer of 1956 Laird Bell, Chicago lawyer, chairman of the Weyerhaeuser Corporation, and trustee extraordinary, put the case succinctly for trustee involvement. "Furthermore, the trustees cannot properly abdicate all concern with educational matters. Logically the trustees as the controlling body have the right — and in fact the duty — to determine what *kind* of education shall be offered. As custodians of the property and funds

tees of the institution for others (the public interest, in this case, implicit in tax exemption and other privileges) the trustees must satisfy themselves that the institution is, indeed, meeting a valid social concern."

11. Their failure to do so in recent years is revealed in the survey conducted by J. A. Davis of the Research Triangle Institute, described

in the Preface. While 80% of the trustees responding to the questionnaire indicated that their institutions had long range plans projecting institutional goals, only 19% reported that they had taken an active part in deciding on the plans. Almost half had received and advised with respect to the plans, and 35% had approved and confirmed, i.e. rubber-stamped. Thirty-one percent

professed to be quite satisfied with the long range plans, 50% reasonably satisfied, and 19% somewhat or quite concerned. The trustees of public institutions were slightly less involved in actively formulating plans and less satisfied with them than the trustees of private institutions. What the survey does not reveal is the nature of the long range plans and the kind of institutional

goals. One suspects that they involved enrollment projections, master plans for the campus, financial growth charts rather than concerns for the kind of students, the range of instruction, the level of academic quality, the nature of student life, extra-mural services, and the like. It is interesting to note that J. Stephen Collins found in a recent survey that 60% of

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they are bound to see that they are devoted to the purposes for which they were given. They are free (subject to the terms of their charter and endowments of course) to determine whether the institution shall be a liberal arts college, a technical school, a professional school or a teachers college, whether new projects shall be undertaken, new schools or institutes created, existing ones liquidated, and so on. They also can and should have much influence in what might be called the tone of the institution. But once overall policy is decided it *ought* to be true that the educational experts should determine how the policy is to be implemented."¹²

Looked at in another way, Pray writes: "The evidence is overwhelming that when any professional group is left entirely to itself, whether it be a church, the military, a government, or an educational system, syndicalist structures become dominant. Traditions, the instinct for self-protection, and resistance to change combine to stultify progress and bring the organization to a further and further remoteness from public concerns and needs."¹³ Faculty prefer to teach bright students and thus tend to skew admissions procedures in favor of those with high intellectual aptitudes. The conservatism of faculty with respect to the curriculum is notorious. Academic departments are often little fiefdoms. Sometimes they are run quite arbitrarily by strong-minded chairmen; sometimes they become a

club into which only the like-minded are acceptable, instead of a team representing diverse talents and viewpoints. The trend in recent years toward large scale research and to the often related services to society has produced a breed of scholar who is normally not much interested in curriculum planning. Few faculty members are interested in trying to understand their institution as a whole or are able to see it in relation to the needs and demands of the surrounding and supporting society.

This is the task of trustees and regents who should be constantly examining and assessing the performance of the college or university as well as the performance of its administration and staff. They should be forever asking questions. Why this? Why that? This is not interference with administration. This is the kind of surveillance necessary to fulfill the trust committed to them.¹⁴ The traditional laissez-faire role of trustees suffers from the assumptions (1) that administration and faculty left to themselves will see to it that the institution functions as well as its resources permit, (2) that left to themselves they will set the highest goals for their own performance and judge their performance objectively, and (3) that the president provides all the objective information necessary for their appraisal of the institution.¹⁵ These assumptions may be justified in exceptional cases. Since they are not universally valid, it behooves governing boards to keep a much closer audit on per-

presidents who had left their office in the past five years reported that their boards did not have a clear understanding of their institutions' plans and goals (unpublished doctoral research, in progress at Boston College, 1974; cited by Kauffman, *Selection of College Presidents*, p. 49).

12. Laird Bell, "From the Trustees' Corner," address

to Institute for College and University Administrators (Harvard University, June 27, 1956); reprinted in *Association of American Colleges Bulletin*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (October, 1956), p. 354.

13. Pray, "Trusteeship for Colleges and Universities."

14. John Corson states the point vividly in what might be called Corson's Law: "I

prescribe that trustees keep their noses in operations that they may keep their fingers out." "The Board of Trustees—Necessity or Anachronism?" *ABG Reports*, Vol. 15, No. 9 (July/August, 1973), p. 8.

15. These assumptions are developed in Greenleaf's *Trustees as Servants*, p. 10-11, and *The Institution as Servant*, pp. 13-16.

16. Beardsley Ruml and Donald H. Morrison in their widely read *Memo to a College Trustee* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1959) offer in Part 1 a variation on this argument. Starting from the premises, first, that liberal education is essential to modern society, second, that trustees are ultimately responsible for the program of education in their institutions, and third,

formance.

G. Bridge between community and campus. Just as trustees must interpret the campus to the community, so they must interpret the needs of society to the college or university. Trustees hold a trust, as we have seen, which in the last analysis is, for private as well as public institutions, a public trust. They are responsible for seeing that their institution serves a social purpose, and this means that they must present or represent the needs of society at large. The more turbulent the changes occurring in society, the more important becomes this function of trustees.

One might expect those critics of society, the faculty, to perform this function, and many of them do. But here we stumble over a paradox. No professional group is more insulated from society, more protected from discovering the consequences of its actions, than the academic world. This is partly the result of the relative isolation of the campus from the surrounding community — an isolation which, while breaking down, still exists. It is partly due to preoccupation with scholarly activities and associations. It is partly due to built-in protective devices. The average professor has his patients or clients provided to him. He largely dictates (though less of late) what they shall study. He controls their immediate destiny by his power over grades and degrees and letters of recommendation. If successful in his first few years of teaching and re-

search, he has tenure, which means a lifetime job. No wonder faculty members frequently become myopic in their outlook. No wonder it is easier for them to become critical of other institutions — business, the church, health care, government — than to be critical of their own.¹⁶

Trustees are, or ought to be, the antennae of their institution, relaying back what the surrounding world is like. Their responsibility is to encourage constructive change. They should not try to engineer such change, for that is the task of faculty and administration. At the least their responsibility is to challenge the status quo; at best it is to transmit the needs and temper of society and to suggest the directions which programs might take.

H. Preservation of institutional independence.

Among the institutions of modern society colleges and universities have enjoyed a high degree of autonomy, i.e. the freedom to manage their internal affairs without outside interference or dictation. "Autonomy, in the sense of full self-governance," say the members of the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, "does not now exist for American higher education, nor has it existed for a very long time — if ever. Autonomy is limited by the law, by the necessary influences and controls that go along with financial support, and by public policy in areas of substantial public concern. Autonomy in these areas is neither possible nor generally

that college faculties, as a group of special advocates for their own subject matter, are not competent as a body to make the kind of judgments necessary for the design of a proper curriculum, they conclude that trustees must recapture from the faculty the design and control of the curriculum. They hold no brief for the great wisdom in this area of the trustees themselves. They suggest

that the trustees can and should establish whatever mechanism—whether a special faculty committee on the curriculum or a joint faculty-administration-trustee committee or some other device—will insure that the curriculum reflects the basic needs of society.

17. Carnegie Commission, *Governance of Higher Education*, p. 17. Chapter 4 of this report provides an excellent analysis of the problem.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

19. Lyman A. Glenny and Thomas K. Dalglish, "Higher Education and the Law," in *The University as an Organization*, p. 200. The entire chapter is an illuminating account of the encroachment of law on educational institutions.

desirable."¹⁷ What we normally mean by autonomy, as we saw earlier, is the freedom to manage the internal affairs of the university within the broad boundaries set by law, by financial support, and by public policy. These internal affairs include academic freedom, research, the curriculum, selection of students, appointment of faculty and staff, allocation of funds. The justification for this degree of independence stems from the complex and delicate nature of the educational enterprise. The capacity for independent thought cannot be developed by thought control. The university's function as a critic of society presupposes a certain independence from the society being criticized. This sort of autonomy was not achieved without a struggle. Church and king and democratic society relinquished all but their rights to set general policy largely because the results in terms of contribution to society were found to justify the independence.

Since World War II, however, the situation has drastically changed, so drastically in fact that the members of the Carnegie Commission view the preservation of independence as one of the major crises facing higher education at the present time. Recent examples of coercion, largely through tactics of disruption, and recent student campaigns to deny freedom of speech on campus (e.g. the refusal to allow Shockley to present his views on racial genetics) are serious threats to autonomy from within. The increased public concern

with the content and practices of education as a result of the politicization of the campus, increased legislative and gubernatorial controls over expenditures and policies, the growth of federal controls as the price of federal grants, the creation of multi-campus and multi-institutional governing boards and of statewide coordinating councils pose an even more serious threat to the independence of higher education. As institutions grow ever larger, as purposes and loyalties become more confused, internal management by reasoned judgment gives way to the formal regulations of bureaucracy. The rights of conflicting groups become central, and so we find greater and greater resort to legal procedures and to appeals to public courts to determine internal educational issues. "Higher education increasingly is taking on a public utility status subject to regulation in the name of the public interest."¹⁸ The demand, as we saw in an earlier section, is for accountability — accountability for student behavior, for faculty performance, for the kind and quality of public service, and above all for expenditures.

I defined autonomy as the relative freedom of an institution to manage its own internal affairs, and it is very important to note that governing boards are a part of that process. "Such autonomy as the university has, in a strictly legal sense, is directly synonymous with the autonomy of the governing board."¹⁹ This puts governing boards in a very peculiar, very delicate and very

20. Perkins, *The University as an Organization*, pp. 208-9.

21. Howard R. Bowen, "Governance and Educational Reform," in *Agony and Promise*, ed. by G. Kerry Smith (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1969), p. 177. Bowen speaks from the vantage point of a president of both a private college and of a state university as well as from that of a trustee.

22. Note the two essays prepared for the Association of Governing Boards, Logan Wilson, "External Governance in Higher Education: Bane or Boon?" and Harold L. Enarson, "The Occasional Search for the Public Interest: State Coordination of Postsecondary Education and the Higher Learning" (both xeroxed, 1974); both to be published in *AGB Reports*, Vol. 17, No. 5

(March/April, 1975). See also Chapter 16, "Multi-Institutional, Coordinating Super-boards," in Louis H. Heilbron, *The College and University Trustee* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1973).

important position. As Perkins eloquently points out in his chapter on "Conflicting Responsibilities of Governing Boards," trustees and regents are at one and the same time agents of the society which has created their institutions and spokesmen for the special interests of those institutions themselves. Speaking of state universities he says: "But how does a regent act as an agent of the state and as a member of an autonomous organization at the same time? How does a regent conceive his role when he is appointed by the state to an office designed to protect the institution from the state itself?"²⁰ The same paradox obtains in the case of the trustees of private institutions, whose responsibility is to guide, nourish and protect their college or university while simultaneously exercising their judgment and influence in the public interest. The only solution lies along the lines suggested by Bowen: "The function of the governing board is to be a guardian of the public interest while insulating the university from undue pressures from outside groups. The governing board must so clearly represent the public interest that it can protect the autonomy of the university from improper encroachments of legislative bodies, government agencies, donors, and other outsiders."²¹

The problem is particularly acute for the trustees and regents of institutions which have been enveloped within some sort of system. The system may consist of a single university with many campuses, or of a collec-

tion of institutions of the same type (e.g. state colleges or community colleges), or of all postsecondary institutions within a state (such as "The University of the State of New York" comprising 73 separate institutions), or of all the educational institutions within the state, private as well as public, brought under the aegis of a statewide coordinating council. The trend toward such systems, already noted, appears irresistible. The advantages look obvious; the limitations less so.²² The responsibilities of the members of these super-boards are so enormous that it is difficult to compare them with the responsibilities of "ordinary" boards. They need and deserve a separate study.

My concern is for the responsibility of the trustee or regent of a single institution caught up within a system. It is inevitable that the system board will make many of the important decisions; otherwise there would be no point in establishing the system. But if the trustee is concerned for the autonomy of his own institution, he must resist the complete encroachment of the super-board or coordinating council. He must fight for the retention of some authority. If he takes his job seriously, he will understand better than the members of the statewide board the needs and areas of service of his local institution. Even if the local board is limited to an advisory role, its members should do everything in their power to make sure that their advice is well informed and listened to. Individual institutional con-

23. Consider the appalling picture presented by James Gilbert Paltridge, Julie Hurst and Anthony Morgan in their study of the actions, as recorded in the minutes of 19 state university boards for a period of one year [Boards of Trustees: Their Decision Patterns (Berkeley: Center for Research and Development in Higher Education, University of California/Berkeley, 1973)].

This is summarized by Paltridge under the title "Folklore and Some Facts about Trustee Decisions," in *AGB Reports*, Vol. 16, No. 6 (March, 1974), p. 21, where the comments: "The most significant finding is that boards undertake a tremendous volume of decision actions in the course of a year's meetings, and that much of this volume consists of proforma actions on

long lists of detailed operational matters. The responsibility for policy formulation, long-term planning, administrative guidance, review of performance, and support of the institution in the realization of its goals are frequently given minor attention or left to the initiative of administrators or governmental agencies."

cerns, like states' rights, may not be so sacrosanct as formerly asserted. To ignore them completely, however, is to distort the proper distribution of power and responsibility.

I. Court of final appeal. Since trustees possess final legal authority, there is no body other than the courts or the legislature which can legally challenge their decisions. Faculty or students may protest the board's decisions and may argue for a different policy, but short of lobbying in the state capitol in the case of public institutions or going to court in the case of public and private colleges and universities, they have no further redress. And if faculty or students go to law, it is the governing boards which are sued and whose decisions are either upheld or overturned by the courts.

In periods of relative tranquility trustees had little occasion to adjudicate disputes or disagreements. The authority of faculty and administration sufficed for most problems. The erosion of that authority together with the proliferation of conflict create an altogether different situation. The rejected applicant, the dismissed student, the faculty member denied reappointment are all prepared to take their case to the board. As collective bargaining spreads, it is the board which must approve the final settlement. Governance by conflict inevitably involves the governing board as final arbiter, short of the courts, of a wide series of administrative decisions.

J. Self-evaluation. If trusteeship is to be taken seriously, the responsibility of trustees to assess the performance of the institution as a whole includes the responsibility to assess the quality of their own performance. How rarely this is done!

Let me put the issue bluntly in a series of questions.

(1) Has your board a clear statement of its legal, moral and social responsibilities? If not, how can the members be sure that they know what is expected of them? (2) How often have you or any committee of your board given serious thought to the most desirable board membership? Is it the best possible? How could it be improved? What is being done about it? (3) Has your board ever set aside time to consider what its business really is, i.e. what matters it should be considering?²³ Do you devote some time once a year to deciding what are the important issues which must get board attention over the next twelve months? How adequate are the background materials provided by the staff? (4) Has your board ever appointed a committee to assess board performance in relation to the questions enumerated above, or employed consultants to assist in this process? Does the board as a whole stand off periodically (once a year, once every two years, three years?) to review its own performance with an eye to how it might discharge its responsibilities more effectively?

Responsibility, like charity, begins at home.

24 THE EFFECTIVE BOARD

Some governing boards are superb; some are the reverse; and the vast majority fall somewhere in between. Every board is capable of improvement. In the light of present problems and opportunities, every board needs to examine how it can become more effective.

In the section on major responsibilities of trustees I suggested a number of ways in which individual trustees could and should improve their performance. The effectiveness of a board, however, is more than the sum of the contributions of its individual members. The board is an organism, not a collection. The quality of its functioning depends, in addition to individual input, on size, structure, leadership, morale, and a network of interrelationships of trustees among themselves, with administration, faculty, students and the community outside the campus.

There is no single pattern of effectiveness. Board operations will vary with the type of institution, the nature of the members, the intellectual and political climate, the problems to be faced. What will work in one situation may not in another, and the choice of the right pattern for a given institution calls for a combination of political sensitivity, imagination, wisdom and courage.

1. This is not meant to exclude trustees from a concern with administration, from being consulted by administrative officers and giving advice on administrative problems. A wise trustee, Edward G. Wilson, in a private letter to the author, states it well: "A strict adherence to such a cleavage would, to my mind, preclude the chief executive officer or the chief financial officer from discussing proposed administrative action with individual board members and perhaps at times

the whole board. The board chairman or specific members frequently have experience or an objective approach through the use of which college or university officials can frequently gain greater perspective and come to better administrative decisions than if they tried to act solely on their own. I suspect that this kind of consultation was not intended to be eliminated, but it has been my experience that trustees and directors are all too prone to abdicate proper involvement by say-

ing (or thinking) I deal only in policy. On the other side, I have known of disastrous cases where the college or university board tried to second guess the president or hamstring his operations with administrative restraints. It seems to me that the emphasis might be on the need to support the president and always work through him and the administration (or change him or it) rather than categorically to say trustees should have nothing to do with administration."

2. Cited in Morton A. Rauh's *The Trusteeship of Colleges and Universities*, p. 75.

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The most important considerations, or at least some of them, are discussed in this section.

Before turning to them, however, I want to reiterate one point made at the very beginning. In negotiating the very tricky course between delegating to administration and faculty control over many of the educational decisions and maintaining some responsibility for the total educational program, it is easy to confuse policy with execution, supervision with administration. It is the board's responsibility to approve salary scales, but (with the exception of the president's and possibly other top administrators') not individual salaries; to approve the master campus plan rather than the architectural and engineering details of individual buildings; to share in policy decisions regarding the range and quality of instruction (liberal arts, engineering, law, vocational vs. non-vocational), but not the content of courses; to help set policy on admissions, minority students, scholarships and grants, but not to meddle in individual cases. The fact that governing boards are increasingly becoming boards of appeal, as noted above, is an additional reason why trustees should not get involved in actual administration.¹

The public community colleges may be an exception

to this generalization. According to data developed at the School of Education of Indiana University the median size of community college boards is seven.² Whether due to their smallness, to their newness, to inexperience or to problems peculiar to these community oriented institutions, the boards of community colleges apparently play a more active role in the administration of the institution's affairs than do normally the boards of other types of institution. If this situation continues, it may prove to be a serious handicap to the community colleges.

A. New sense of responsibility and commitment. Of the several factors determining the effectiveness of governing boards none is more important than the acceptance of a new range and level of responsibility — acceptance by trustees individually and by governing boards as organic wholes. In the Research Triangle Institute (RTI) survey trustees and presidents were asked to rate the adverse effect on the performance of their boards of a set of eighteen factors. The two judged to be most important were the lack of experience of some board members (45% of the trustees, 46% of the presidents) and lack of understanding by some board members as to how a board should function (44% of

trustees, 55% of presidents). Thirty-five percent of the trustees and 32% of the presidents judged the presence of too much deadwood on the board as having an adverse effect "to a considerable or moderate extent." Thirty-four percent of the trustees and 26% of the presidents viewed absenteeism in the same light. Twenty-five percent of the trustees and 29% of the presidents indicated that the failure of the board to accept and exercise its responsibilities as a board had to a considerable or moderate extent affected adversely the functioning of the board. All five factors are in one form or another a failure to accept proper responsibility. They all indicate a failure on the part of trustees to understand the real character of the trust they hold.

The corollary of responsibility is commitment, and commitment means work. In a study of 5,000 college and university trustees made in 1968 by Rodney T. Hartnett of the Educational Testing Service and Morton A. Rauh, vice president of Antioch College,³ over half the respondents reported attendance at all meetings and 80% at more than three out of four. In the RTI survey (1973) 51% of the presidents reported board attendance as "excellent", 48% "generally good," and 2% "unsatisfactory."⁴ Trustees are busy men and women. In the light of competing demands the record of their board attendance is a commendable one.

Unfortunately the same cannot be said of the amount of time they have allocated to college and university

that money is more valuable than time, and no doubt many private college and university presidents would gladly exchange the services of a board member for a gift in seven figures. If so inclined, it might be well to heed the words of Atherton Bean, Minneapolis businessman, philanthropist and former chairman of the board of trustees of Carleton College: "It is popularly supposed that the only skill that a trustee needs is either the ability to give money (if that is a skill) or to persuade others to do so (which certainly is) . . . There is no particular reason why the possession of a few millions of dollars and recurrent generous impulses should act to keep a person off a college board. However, the fact of the matter is that, at least in my experience, very few trustees have been chosen for that narrow combination of 'virtues.' I can visualize choosing a very limited number of trustees for wealth alone, but in my book the person who is willing to contribute no more than money is of marginal worth."⁶

Over the years one of the standard criticisms of governing boards has been the imbalance between the weight of their decisions and the amount of time devoted to reaching them. The problems are now so many and so exacting that the question can properly be raised whether an individual should serve on more than one college or university board at the same time. The experience gained from multiple membership is without doubt useful, but with limited time and funds

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3. This important survey is reported by Rodney T. Hartnett, *College and University Trustees: Their Backgrounds, Roles and Educational Attitudes* (Princeton: Educational Testing Service, 1969). Further analyses of these data are to be found in Hartnett's *The New College Trustee: Some Predictions for the 1970's* (Princeton: Educational Testing Service, 1970). The 1968 survey provides the basis for many of the observations in Rauh's book, *The Trusteeship of Colleges and Universities*.

ship of Colleges and Universities.

4. The variation among types of institution is interesting. Community college trustees were judged excellent by 75% of presidents, public universities by 67%, private junior colleges by 53%, private liberal arts colleges by 41%, private universities by 38%, state colleges by 36%, and black colleges by 29%.

5. Rauh, *Trusteeship of Colleges and Universities*, p.110.

6. Atherton Bean, "The Liberal Arts College Trustee in the Last Quarter of the Twentieth Century," an essay written for the Association of Governing Boards (xeroxed, 1974), to be published in *AGB Reports*, Vol. 17, No. 6 (May/June, 1975).

7. For example, Hartnett found in 1968 a male-female ratio of 86 to 13; the RTI survey found it to be 83 to 17 six years later. In the Hartnett survey 96% of trustees were Caucasian, 1% black; in the RTI survey it was 90% white, 9% black and 1% other. In the 1968 Hartnett study 36% of trustees were 60 or over, 37% between 50 and 60, 26% under 50. In the 1973 RTI survey the comparable percentages are 33% 31% and 37%. It should be noted, however, that the two surveys are not strictly compar-

affairs. The ETS survey of 1968 revealed that the median amount of time devoted by trustees to all forms of service to their institutions (committee meetings, solicitation, conferences, travel, etc. in addition to attending board meetings) was 63 hours per year — just over five hours per month or one and a quarter hours per week. The RTI survey of 1973 shows some improvement. Here 65% of the trustees devote between one and two days per month to their institutions, 21% between three and four days, 10% between five and eight days, 3% nine days or more. In both studies the record of the trustees of public institutions is significantly better than that of the private colleges and universities.

At the upper end of the scale the amount of time expended is remarkable, but for the majority of trustees it is inadequate. Rauh rightly defends the type of individual whose contribution in qualitative terms outweighs the lack of quantity. "Sometimes it is the quality of their insights, the quickness of their minds, or the brilliance of their personalities which has an almost catalytic effect on the rest of the board."⁵ He goes on to say, however, that a board cannot tolerate very many such individuals.

Another defense of short-changing the institution is

the competing demands of two or more educational institutions can seriously reduce the contribution which the trustee makes to any of them. There are notable exceptions — men like Laird Bell whose wisdom, wealth and time made it possible for him to make significant contributions to Harvard, Chicago and Carleton on the boards of which he served simultaneously. But they are the exceptions, and the rest of this breed of public servants, who are likely also to be serving on the boards of other types of organizations, ought carefully to consider whether they can discharge properly their duties as trustees for more than one college or university at a time.

The argument of this section is primarily moral — an appeal to the conscience of trustees to make the commitment necessary to meet the responsibilities inherent in the position. There are also very practical reasons why trustees should devote more time and thought to the affairs of their institutions. The trend toward class action suits and toward holding trustees or directors of private institutions responsible for the satisfactory discharge of their trust in the public interest is creating a situation which trustees cannot afford to ignore. Judge Gerhard Gesell in the Sibley Hospital case, referred to

in footnote 13 of *Governance: Confusion Worse Confounded* above, ruled that under the Non-Profit Corporation Act of the District of Columbia hospital trustees were legally liable for failure to exercise "a reasonable amount of diligence and care" in supervision (in this instance) of financial affairs. This principle could easily be stretched to include the more important issues of educational quality, opportunity, and cost.

B. Diversity of membership. A classic criticism of governing boards has been the alleged monolithic character of their membership — white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, well-to-do business and professional men, in short, the "establishment" with all its basic conservatism. Over the past century there has been some truth in this description, although boards have rarely been so uniform as depicted. Currently the situation seems to be changing fairly rapidly in response to various pressures for diversification.⁷

It has been argued that the proposition that diversity improves the effectiveness of boards is an assumption for which we lack adequate evidence.⁸ This may be true, but it is unlikely to dissuade anyone from the belief that differences in talent, in skill and in experience will provide better decisions over a wide range of issues than would result from a single perspective; or that participation by individuals diverse in age, background and experience would render board decisions more acceptable. The more complex the institution,

language both the motivation for change and the absurdities to which it can lead: "The current fascination with accountability seems to me to have at least two sources — and they make strange bedfellows at that. One is an essentially conservative source, concerned with cost-benefit relationships, priority-ordering and a sense of administrative tidiness; the other is the new populism, a movement to ensure that public institutions are more directly and immediately responsive to popular will . . . Populist accountability is . . . if you will, *downward accountability*. It stems from a feeling that too much power is already concentrated in the hands of the establishment. Indeed, it is control of education by the powerful that keeps institutions from being responsive to popular will and excites the kind of populism evident today. Populists argue that all the people should have a voice in making educational policy. Regrettably, however, the populace is not of a piece. It is segmented and seeks to have its segments (or interest groups) represented in policy making. A board of trustees representing all those segments of society having an interest in higher education would be wondrous to behold! It would be a veritable Noah's Ark; and while it might float, it wouldn't sail."

The argument in short is that the legitimacy of governing boards depends on the extent to which they represent all interested parties. Taken literally, this would create an awkward arrangement for private in-

able, since Hartnett's was entirely random and RTI's was by category of institution. Hartnett's report, *College and University Trustees*, already referred to, contains the most illuminating recent account of the background, characteristics and attitudes of trustees.

8. Rauh, *Trusteeship of Colleges and Universities*, p. 100.

9. Homer D. Babbidge, Jr., "State College and University Trustees, Requiem or Renaissance?" essay written for the Association of Governing Boards (xeroxed, 1974), pp. 8-9; to be published in *AGB Reports*, Vol. 17, No. 7 (July/August, 1975).

10. For a thoughtful and balanced statement of this position, see Earl J. McGrath's chapter, "Who Should Have the Power?" in *Power and Authority*, ed. by Harold L. Hodgkinson and L. Richard Meeth (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1971). Also McGrath, *Should Students Share the Power?* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1970).

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the more important it becomes to be able to distill a collective decision from the views of people familiar with different phases of its many operations and representative of its different constituencies.

Colleges and universities profit from the specific skills of individual trustees. The businessman, lawyer, doctor, educator has each his particular area of expertise. So has the individual close to the ever changing "youth culture" and the government official, foundation officer, civic planner or whoever is attuned to the shape of things to come. It should be noted, however, that colleges and universities profit from the knowledge and advice of these experts and not from their professional services. Not only is it imperative to avoid any semblance of conflict of interest; with increasing need for professional services the university must be free to employ the people most suitable to its needs.

Even if diversity of background and viewpoint were not an important factor in reaching wise decisions on complex issues, it would be desirable for a quite different reason. In an earlier section I outlined the kind of challenge currently being made to the authority of the conventional boards. Homer Babbidge, former president of the University of Connecticut, sums up in blunt

stitutions and an impossible one for public colleges and universities. Taken in moderation, as we have seen, diversity adds to legitimacy and thus in turn to effectiveness.

Over the past decade a vigorous case has been presented for the inclusion of faculty and students as the two groups most directly involved in and affected by the activities of the university. After all, who knows better than the faculty what education is all about and how the university functions? Who, better than the students, know what they really want and need and how well the institution is meeting their needs?¹⁰ A growing number of institutions are including either faculty or students or both on their governing boards, and so far one hears very little complaint. The results are not likely to be disastrous; indeed, the understanding of trustees of central issues may be distinctly improved. Nevertheless, I believe it is a mistake for several reasons. The first is conflict of interest. We have seen how the modern university is fractured by conflicting interests, each of which has its faculty supporters. Both faculty and students have vested interests in various aspects of their institutions, and these can all too easily become confused with or conflict with the

best interests of the institution as a whole.¹¹

The second is confusion of roles. Trustees have the ultimate responsibility for seeing that goals are set for the university and that those goals are being pursued. Faculty and administration, however much they may contribute to the formulation of goals, are the agents responsible for carrying them out. Students attend the institution presumably because they like the goals and the methods of reaching them. Neither faculty nor students have the ultimate responsibility which falls to the trustees.¹²

My third reason is based on a rejection of the concept of the trustee as representative of anything except the public welfare. The trustee of the private as well as the public institution, to repeat what has been said earlier, holds a public trust. It is his responsibility to see that the college or university serves not some private or parochial purpose only, but that it functions in a way that enhances the well-being of society. The demand that a governing board be composed of representatives of various constituencies is as mistaken as would be the suggestion that an orchestra or a football team must represent different segments of society. I shall have more to say on this subject in the next section on the selection of trustees.

It is essential to make absolutely clear, however, that governing boards must reflect the various points of view of interested parties. To be effective they must be

able; at their worst, a disaster.¹⁴

While a youthful outlook or understanding is not a function of chronological age, it is wise to have a good age spread, and that means for most boards the addition of more younger members, including some just out of college. The effectiveness of boards will depend in part on diversity exemplified both in a variety of professional skills and experience and in part on the sensitive reflection of different constituencies.

C. The process of selection. The more important the role of trustees, the more important is the process of their selection. The more carefully and astutely trustees are selected, the more likely is their authority to be recognized and accepted. The relevance of this to the effectiveness of boards is obvious. There are many methods of choosing trustees, and the choice of method will depend in large part on the type of institution — whether public or private, local or national. One observation, however, applies to all types. Every governing board should give serious and continuous attention to its perpetuation. The chairman or the president or the committee on nominations should be constantly asking what kind of people would strengthen the board and should be maintaining an ever-changing roster of individuals to be considered for membership. Too many choices have been made on the spur of the moment under pressure for quick decisions. The selection of new trustees or regents is surely as important, and

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11. Samuel B. Gould, former chancellor of the State University of New York, puts it well in his chapter, "Trustees and the University Community," in *The University as an Organization*, p. 220: "The basic clash between trustees and rest of the community, which results in the demand for formal faculty and student representation, originates in a lack of agreement or understanding about the purposes and goals of the institution itself. One must sadly but truthfully admit

that not all board members accept their responsibilities on the basis of a deep commitment to the specific objectives of a university. . . . The same lack of understanding and commitment exists among many faculty and students, who choose their institutions for personal reasons that have little or nothing to do with what these institutions are trying to be or to achieve. Their interest in the university is peripheral except when it affects a specific goal of their own."

12. It is perhaps worth noting that some writers on governance take the reverse position, namely that student trustees are mere tokens at best and likely to become so assimilated by the overwhelming majority that they will fail to make a truly independent contribution.

13. In the RTI survey 42% of the presidents responding indicated that one or more of their board committees included non-board members; 71% indicated that board committees met regularly with college representatives who were not committee members; and 77% said that they believed that board committees should meet regularly with non-board members or other college representatives.

sensitive to the needs and hopes of different constituencies. Nor should these remarks be construed as denying both faculty and students a role in the governance of higher education. Faculty already have substantial authority and power; students are clearly gaining it. All-college councils and university senates composed of administrators, faculty, students, staff (with or without trustees) are an increasingly popular device. So is the practice of having faculty and students as members of trustee committees or meeting on a regular basis with such committees.¹³ Yet another device is to invite faculty and students to participate in the nomination of new board members.

The advantages of having educators from other institutions on governing boards should be obvious. They are the "professionals," presumably with wide experience in education. They can report on trends and new developments. They can interpret faculty points of view. If eminent in their field, they can command respect from the local faculty and add distinction to the board as a whole. On the other hand, they can be a negative or divisive influence if they adopt a narrowly academic point of view or attempt to be spokesmen for a local faculty faction. At their best they are indispens-

deserves as much forethought and search, as the choice of full professors and deans.

In private colleges and universities the selection of new trustees has fewer legal or statutory complications than is true for public institutions. To a large extent the private boards are self-perpetuating. One exception to this occurs in the case of church-related institutions where the founding, and hopefully supporting, church appoints a significant bloc of trustees. The desire to maintain denominational influence or control is understandable and legitimate. The difficulty lies in the criteria of appointment; individuals are apt to be chosen for their prominence in the denomination or their zeal for the true faith rather than for their interest in and understanding of education. This danger can be and should be minimized by careful groundwork — a combined educational and political process — on the part of current trustees and college officials.

An increasing number of private colleges and universities are inviting alumni to nominate or to elect a certain number of trustees. The number may vary from the entire board, as in Harvard's Board of Overseers, to one or two. Whatever the range, it is based on recognition of the contribution which alumni do or can make

to the institution. It is also based on another principle, as Hugh Calkins points out in a discussion of how trustees should be selected for a private university. "The first requirement is legitimacy. The majority of the board should be selected by some process which is demonstrably difficult to manipulate. Election by the alumni, who are disinterested and responsible for significant financial support; is a satisfactory and widely used procedure, which probably should be employed for a plurality of trustees. There are other possibilities which could be tried for the selection of a few trustees. Some might be chosen by faculty or students, with the limitation that they choose neither faculty nor student from the particular institution. Some might be chosen by individuals or bodies who speak for the region -- the governor, the mayor, the judiciary, or a near-by public university."¹⁵

The generally self-perpetuating character of most private governing boards is their strength and their weakness. The concept is being widely challenged. Whether valid or not, the criticism needs to be blunted by the selection of trustees who command respect, who can restore and hold the authority necessary for effectiveness. Boards must avoid the "country club" syndrome. Differences of opinion within a board, when they do not degenerate into personal antagonisms or rigid doctrinal positions, are both natural and healthy. Unanimity, if it occurs at all, should not be

14. Harold W. Dodds, president emeritus of Princeton, has some trenchant comments on the subject of professors as board members in *The Academic President—Educator or Caretaker?* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1962), pp. 225-30.

15. Calkins, "Plan for Survival," (xeroxed), p. 25.

16. For significant variations by type of institution—public vs. private, two-year vs. four-year—see Davis, *Effective College and University Board*, pp. 9-12.

17. Hartnett, *College and University Trustees*, p. 68.

18. On the other hand, as experienced an observer as Robben W. Fleming, president of the University of Michigan, takes a quite different position. In an essay written for AGB he sums up the relative merits of election vs. appointment in the following terms: "While these arguments are well known, behavior of boards cannot really be tied to the method of selection. Boards in the same state and with the same process of selection do behave entirely differently. One board will al-

most totally disregard party labels, divide on issues according to the merits as individual members see them, carefully avoid intra-board cliques, exhibit kindness and generosity toward one another, and close ranks in support of a position once it is taken. Another will be intensely loyal to party positions, divide in almost routine fashion according to either personality or political differences, encourage internal divisiveness, and erode the majority's position by continuing to attack

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the starting point but the conclusion achieved through discussion and debate.

Some interesting judgments were revealed by the responses of presidents in the RTI survey to a question asking them how influential certain factors were in the actual selection of new board members and how influential they thought they should be. In actual influence 48% judged community stature to be important, 37% the advice of the president, 35% leadership skills, and so on down the line. In terms of what factors should be influential, 73% favored leadership skills, 65% community stature, and for the private institutions 56% (universities) to 85% (junior colleges) identified fund-raising capability. Past affiliation with the institution was rated surprisingly low both in actual influence and as a desirable factor.¹⁶

With the dramatic shift since World War II of students to publicly supported colleges and universities, the selection of their trustees or regents becomes particularly important. I shall discuss the four-year institutions separately from the two-year community colleges. According to the ETS survey of 1968, 8% of the large state university trustees are elected by public vote, 59% are appointed by the governor, and the balance of

one-third arrive at their position through some other route. Among state colleges only 1% are elected, whereas 85% are appointed by the governor.¹⁷ The case for popular election is of course based on doctrinaire democratic theory. Apart from that, little can be said for it. If elections are not tied to party politics, interest is apt to run low. On the other hand, educational issues do not readily fit into party politics, and if tied together the victor at the polls is more likely to reflect the general success of his party than the wisdom of his educational platform. In an earlier section I outlined some of the forces threatening to politicize the university. If the ideal is to keep politics to a minimum, then popular election of regents or trustees would seem the least desirable method.¹⁸

How much better is gubernatorial appointment with or without the approval of the state legislature? Lee and Bowen, students of the state university system, take a dim view. "The selection system falls short on at least three counts. The boards are highly unrepresentative of the society served by the university. They do not possess legitimacy in the minds of those most directly affected by their power. They are not sufficiently independent of partisan political currents . . . In the context

the result in other forums." "Governing Boards in Major Public Institutions," (xeroxed, 1974), p. 4; to be published in *AGB Reports*, Vol. 17, No. 9 (November / December, 1975). No doubt publicly elected boards can work well and some do, but one recalls the disgraceful state of affairs in one western state where a candidate campaigning on a platform to reverse an important decision of the president won a hotly contested election to the board of regents.

19. Lee and Bowen, "The Multicampus University," *AGB Reports*, Vol. 14, No. 6 (March, 1972), pp. 21-2.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

21. State college and university presidents may not agree with this conclusion. I am not clear how to interpret their responses to the RTI survey question on factors influencing the choice of new trustees. In the large state universities only 3% judged the advice of the president to be of actual in-

fluence, 7% the advice of board members, and 10% the advice of the chairman. State college percentages were somewhat higher, but still less than those for the total group. How is one to interpret, however, the responses of the university presidents to the question, how important the advice of these individuals ought to be? On this score only 7% thought their own advice should be an important factor, 7% the advice of the chairman, and 3% the advice of board members.

Do they really believe that the knowledge and advice of those within the institution should be ignored, or is their apparently defeatist attitude a reflection of what they believe to be political reality?

22. Figures are taken from a survey made for AGB in 1973 by Charles A. Nelson and Frederick J. Turk of Peat, Marwick, Mitchell & Co.

23. The intimate relation between the community college and the community is

of the 1970s, a governor can no more ignore political considerations in the selection of trustees and in their subsequent activities than deny the reality of the next election."¹⁹

What alternatives do we have? Lee and Bowen suggest multiple avenues of selection involving civic groups, business, labor, agriculture, educational associations, to which might be added the judiciary. "Alternatively, and perhaps more practically, a blue-ribbon commission could be established, composed of representatives of such groups, which would be empowered to nominate a panel of candidates (at least two for each vacancy) from which the governor or other appointing authority would be required to make his choice of trustees."²⁰ If the quality of the trustees and regents of public colleges and universities is to be improved, then some such device must be used. This is where existing boards can work for their improvement.²¹ It will not be easy to change traditional practices or to rewrite statutes, but skillful and determined efforts over a period of time might work wonders. In time it might become a matter of pride in all states, as it is now in some, to nominate people of real stature and statesmanship to the governing boards.

The deliberately local orientation of community colleges creates special problems for the choice of their trustees. Here 60% are elected by the public and 35% appointed by the governor or some other public official.²² The close tie between community colleges and school districts and the pattern of operation of the latter make election a natural method. Partisan politics appears to play an insignificant role, and local voters are in a better position, as in the election of school board members, to be familiar with the issues and the individuals. This becomes less true of large metropolitan districts where an additional difficulty is the considerable expense of election. Governors will not, perhaps as Lee and Bowen argue they cannot, disregard political considerations in making appointments. A local screening or nominating committee, however, composed of prominent local citizens could do much to improve the quality of appointments, and their endorsement might influence the results of public election. In any event, the existing boards and the administration have every reason to work at the problem of influencing the choice of candidates.²³ The results will make a difference to the effectiveness of the boards and thereby to the well being of the institution.

clearly reflected in the judgment of the presidents, 62% of whom replied to the RTI survey that community stature was an actual factor in selection, and 82% of whom indicated that it ought to be. This is significantly higher than for any other type of institution.

24. The Indiana University data were collected in 1968. Since then the boards of traditionally Catholic colleges have been undergoing rapid and remarkable changes. Most Catholic in-

stitutions have been adding lay members, and many of them now have a majority of laymen.

25. It will be recalled that Hugh Calkins in the statement quoted above emphasizes legitimacy as the first requirement in selecting board members. In the following paragraph he goes on to say: "The second requirement, which is frequently not met, is deliberativeness. A large board which meets quarterly, or monthly for three hours, is

not of much use for the consideration of issues as difficult as these we have been discussing. No group of fifteen or more people can deliberate, and no deliberation is possible by any group if routine business fills its time. What is needed, in addition to a larger legitimating body, is a small group which meets frequently with president and staff, shares opinions, and forms collective judgments based on a considerable understanding of the university's problems, and of the education issues

of nation, state and region." "A Plan for Survival," p. 25.

26. Apparently trustees and presidents are satisfied with the size of their boards or have no strong convictions on the subject. In response to the question on the RTI survey whether an increase or decrease in size would improve the functioning of their boards, 7% of both groups favored an increase, whereas 14% of the trustees and 9% of the presidents favored a decrease. As would be natural, a higher per-

D. Size and frequency. There is no clear evidence regarding the optimum size of governing boards or the frequency of their meetings; yet both factors obviously affect the way boards function. A board of three might be efficient, but in the broadest sense would it be effective? Some boards do meet only once a year, but in a rapidly changing social and educational situation it is difficult to see how they could be effective. I treat the two dimensions together since they appear to bear an inverse ratio to one another.

Boards tend to vary in size according to the type of institution. The School of Education of Indiana University reports, as indicated above, that the median figure for community colleges is seven. The median for the four-year public institutions is nine, for private non-denominational colleges and universities 24, for the church-related (except for Catholic institutions) 27. Catholic colleges and universities with a median size of five are the only exception to the general rule that the boards of public institutions tend to be small while those of private colleges and universities are the reverse.²⁴ The need for trustee help in fund raising is undoubtedly a major factor in the larger size of the boards of private institutions. The current pressure for

the viewpoints of different constituencies may also be resulting in some increase in size. The issue is one of efficiency versus other desiderata, such as legitimacy and financial support.²⁵ Bicameral governing boards, in spite of the example of our national government, have not been popular in higher education; and the commonly used executive committee device, as I shall argue in a subsequent section, is a mixed blessing. The limited size of the boards of public institutions is normally set by statute. A few states are increasing the size to allow for student and/or faculty membership; but since there are other ways of bringing diverse viewpoints to the attention of the trustees, we are not likely to experience much pressure for change in size. The boards of private institutions, relatively free to change their bylaws, will have to determine the trade-off between the value of efficiency in reaching decisions and other values. In this connection it is well to remember that the larger the board, the more time it takes to arrive at a considered collective judgment, the greater the temptation to engage in *pro forma* decisions, and the poorer the attendance record. Conversely, the smaller the board, the greater is the danger of board intrusion in administrative matters.²⁶

The range in frequency of board meetings is almost as great as the range in size, and, as one might expect, the dividing line is between public and private institutions. According to the ETS survey 84% of community college boards, 54% of state university boards, and 38% of state college boards meet nine times or more per year. In contrast only 12% of private university boards and 5% of private college boards meet that frequently. Seventy-five percent of private university boards meet between three and eight times per year; 80% of private college boards, four times or less.²⁷

"It is obvious that the frequency with which a board meets," writes Rauh, "will have some influence on the kind of business it transacts. A board with two or three meetings per year finds its formal activities confined to receiving reports and taking *pro forma* actions. Monthly meetings permit a closer time relationship between issues and actions. Nevertheless, there are some virtues in widely spaced meetings, and, conversely, some hazards in frequent ones. The spaced meetings are likely to be longer, frequently two full days, and the total assembled hours may actually be greater than those of boards with shorter, more frequent meetings. Further, these longer blocks of time permit discussion and debate of important issues. Boards that meet frequently may be tempted to intrude on the administrative function."²⁸

What is one to conclude? There is no ideal formula

tion. Good trustees are therefore to be cherished.

But for how long? A good trustee is rarely a thing of beauty and ought not to be a joy forever. A group of septuagenarians who have served together for twenty-five years may constitute a cozy fraternity, but no matter how able some members may still be they will not constitute an effective board. Fortunately this truth is slowly being recognized. We noted in the section on diversity that the percentage of younger board members is increasing and of those over 60 declining. Although life trustees still exist, 68% of the presidents responding to the RTI questionnaire indicated that there are limitations on the terms of service of trustees at their institutions, and 74% said that there ought to be such limitations.

A vital and effective board needs (1) a mandatory retirement provision and (2) some stated limitation on the number of consecutive years or terms a board member may serve. It needs the first rule to safeguard itself against intellectual dry rot. To be sure some men and women in their eighties are more alive, more forward looking, more contemporary in their sympathies, than others in their thirties. The loss of their presence on boards is the price paid for the avoidance of an average board out of touch with the contemporary scene and unable to cope with change. It needs the second rule to insure a constantly fresh flow of ideas and attitudes. A board to be effective must recreate itself.

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tage of the representatives of the private institutions (with the exception of the black colleges) with their larger boards thought a decrease in size would bring about better results.

27. Data from the RTI survey confirm the ETS figures. The number of responses by category is too small to make variations in percentages significant, but the RTI data do indicate that some community college boards meet as often as 21 times per year and that a very high percentage of black college boards meet only once or twice a year.

28. Rauh, *Trusteeship of Colleges and Universities*, pp. 75-6.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

30. See Rauh's comments, *Trusteeship of Colleges and Universities*, pp. 21-2.

31. A thoughtful and knowledgeable critic provides an illuminating personal illustration in a letter to the author. "Perhaps my experience with two boards will give you some additional thoughts on the subject. In one case I was a member of a board which was run by its executive committee. The full board met only three times a year, and a standard item of business each time was the ratification of all actions of the executive committee since the last meeting of the full board. No

for the mix of size, frequency and length of meeting. Community colleges with largely local trustees can manage more frequent meetings. The great private universities have the problem of bringing together prominent and busy men and women from all over the country. You pay your money and you take your choice, as the old sales pitch goes. The only safe conclusion is that each board needs to give careful attention to which combination of coefficients will make it most effective.

E. Continuity and change. There was a time when faculty and presidents provided the continuity a college needs. The modern university president, however, is apt to find ten years a sufficiently long tour of duty on any one campus. The twenty-five years after World War II was an era of tremendous growth, and as a result the mobility of faculty members became so high that they constituted a factor of instability. With the leveling off of growth in the 1970s the job market has changed, and faculty are once again focusing their careers on the institution where they are employed and rediscovering a sense of institutional loyalty. Nevertheless, the governing board provides an essential part of the continuity and stability so important to a living organiza-

Some will argue that boards can achieve all this by wise management and without arbitrary rules which eliminate the good with the poor. More power to them. Most trustees are understandably sensitive about their status. The best ones will try to quit before they have outlived their usefulness and will need to be urged to continue. The problem is how to get rid of dead wood (35% of the trustees responding to the RTI questionnaire faulted their boards on this score), the absentees (34% likewise), those with irreconcilable differences (15%), and the obstructionists (18%). There is no more graceful or effective way than to introduce mandatory rotation and mandatory retirement. It is always possible to re-elect a valuable trustee after he has been off for a year, and the emeritus trustee can be given the right to attend and even to participate in board meetings (though not the right to vote).

F. Board structure — role of committees. Most governing boards function through a system of standing committees, although most community colleges and many state colleges make little use of this conventional pattern of organization. No doubt this is due to the smallness of their boards and, in the case of the community colleges, to the frequency of their meetings. In

general, the larger the boards and the less frequent their meetings, the more they tend to rely on standing committees. This structure provides for division of labor; it capitalizes on the special skills and interests of individual members; it provides an opportunity for involving members more closely in the life of the institution; it saves precious time at board meetings.

The value of a good committee structure is reflected in the responses to the RTI survey. Recipients were asked to what extent each of ten factors operated in the process of making decisions by their boards. Over half the trustees and presidents checked "strong guidance by committees or committee chairmen," which ranked second in the minds of the trustees to the recommendations of the president. As might be expected, fewer respondents from community and state colleges reported that committee guidance was significant in board decisions. On the other hand, a higher percentage of the trustees of the big state universities and both the trustees and the presidents of private colleges rated committee guidance as important.

These judgments reflect a kind of conventional wisdom, distilled from long experience with the operations of various kinds of organizations. There is, however, an ambiguity in the questions which referred to "committee structure" or "strong committee guidance" without specifying that the committees should be standing committees. It is quite possible that at least

the committees could be adapted to the particular problems, that it would tend to focus attention on broad rather than narrow issues of policy, and that "the trustees would have a clearer feeling of involvement and contribution." This proposal, which fits in with the currently popular notion of task forces, deserves serious consideration.

Special thought needs to be given to the role of the executive committee. Where boards are large or widely scattered geographically or meet infrequently, it has been customary to create an executive committee to serve as the full board's alter ego. Such a committee can meet frequently, either at stated times or on call. It is usually small enough to be what Hugh Calkins (footnote 25 above) calls truly deliberative. It is usually composed of the chairmen of other standing committees or of trustees of considerable experience and demonstrated concern. It can be an enormous help and comfort to the beleaguered president.

These advantages, however, can become a problem and a danger. The very fact that the executive committee meets frequently and is composed of the most influential trustees can create the impression of an inner circle which really directs the college. The danger is that the rest of the trustees may feel pushed to the periphery, hesitating to question the decisions of those in the know, or that they may settle for the role of window dressing, while the inner group makes the

attempt was ever made to summarize or otherwise delineate for the full board what these actions were. The executive committee or the chairman thought, I suppose, that the rest of us had read the minutes of the executive committee meetings and did not need to have these actions summarized at full board meetings. I had very much the feeling of being an outsider, and it was all too clear that the executive committee was really running the show.

"My other experience was

quite different. Again, the executive committee met monthly and had power to act on behalf of the full board in between its meetings which were also three times a year. In the second case, however, the chairman very carefully reported at each full board meeting on the actions which the executive committee had taken since the last full board meeting. Comments and questions were also invited. Although I was not a member of this second board, I think that I would

have felt much closer to the operations of the institution because of the way in which the matter of ratification of actions of the executive committee was handled."

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some of the respondents had another pattern in mind, and in trying to gauge the effectiveness of governing boards we ought to consider any alternatives.

Some thoughtful critics of educational organizations are highly skeptical of the value of standing committees. Their activities too often become mere routine. Their predetermined membership may not be suitable to particular problems. Their customary pattern of relatively brief meetings just before meetings of the full board is too inflexible for the variety and urgency of problems affecting higher education. Their preoccupation with particular areas of activity tends to divert the attention of trustees from a concern for the whole institution.

Since most problems require considerable study prior to a decision and since this often demands more time than most trustees can afford, one alternative is to establish ad hoc committees, as is customarily done whenever a search is made for a new president. "The proposal I would make," writes Rauh, "is that standing committees be replaced by ad hoc committees convened to perform specific tasks."²⁹ In favor of this device Rauh argues that it would be a more functionally effective use of trustee time, that the membership of

decisions.³⁰ However effective the executive committee may be, the board as a whole has ceased to be an effective board.

This consequence is not inevitable by any means. Sensitivity on the part of the members of the executive committee, awareness of the potential danger on the part of the chairman of the board and the president, rotation of membership, scrupulous insistence that the minutes of the executive committee be provided for all trustees and that all actions of the committee be reviewed and approved by the board as a whole, will avoid the danger of an inner cabinet.³¹ It takes thought, however. The most effective structure does not happen by itself.

G. Role of the chairman. The most important trustee is, or ought to be, the chairman. He has, if he wishes, considerable influence over the agenda. He is in a strategic position to control and direct board discussion. He should know when to let discussion run freely, how to head off digressions, when to precipitate a decision. Along with the president he must indoctrinate new members into their proper duties and responsibilities. He, more than the president, can educate trustees on how they should function. By his lead-

ership and example he sets the standards for the other trustees.

Here again the responses to the RTI survey are instructive. Forty-eight percent of the trustees rated their chairman as excellent "in making certain that different points of view are expressed and in obtaining satisfactory decisions"; 17% as fair or poor. The judgments of the presidents were 49% excellent and 18% fair or poor. Only two items, the working relationship between board and president and the rapport among the members of the board, were rated by large percentages as excellent. The leadership of the chairman was least frequently cited by the representatives of community colleges, state colleges, and state universities; most frequently by the presidents of private colleges and universities.³²

But should the president be the chairman? Harold Dodds, president emeritus of Princeton and one of the wisest of twentieth century university presidents, argues that he should be. "There are both psychological and symbolic values involved here which emphasize that education is the principal purpose for which the university and board exist."³³ President Fleming of the University of Michigan, while less emphatic, points out that the president as both chairman and presiding officer of the board is in a very strong position. He further notes that there is strong support for this in corporate practice.³⁴

dangers to be guarded against, primarily by the good sense of the chairman and other trustees, but also through precautions to make certain that the chairman does not remain in office too long. Some institutions limit the term of the chairman in their bylaws; others depend upon the collective wisdom of the board. The latter provides greater flexibility; the former offers a more graceful way out of an awkward situation.

Robert K. Greenleaf, to whose views on trusteeship I have already made reference, has advanced an unorthodox proposal regarding the chairman of the large university board.³⁵ "If trustees are to function well within this much broader definition of their role, they need a rather unusual person as chairman. This new chairman will be just as different from the present ones as the affirming trustee is from the reacting type which he will replace. First and foremost, the trustee chairman will not be an officer of administration. In fact, his best career route may not be through administration at all. In large institutions, the chairman will probably be a full-time salaried person. He will be the professional leader of trustees who may be either full-time or part-time . . . The chairman, as leader of the trustees, should be selected by his colleagues for his dedication to optimal performance of the institution and for his ability to make the trustee role an exciting, creative, and very responsible endeavor, far more rewarding to the able trustee than the prevailing reactive role." This

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32. In his report on the RTI survey Davis searches for relationships between judgments of the effectiveness of governing boards and specific factors. Although warning the reader that various considerations limit the value of the correlations (pp. 55-7, 70-1), he concludes: "In the effective board there is comfort with and reliance upon a committee substructure. The firm guidance of the chairman (more clearly than the leadership of the president) also appears critical, as does the quality of

information made available to the board."

33. Dodds, *Academic President*, p. 230.

34. Fleming, "Governing Boards in Major Public Universities," (xeroxed), p. 6.

35. See Dodds, *Academic President*, p. 231.

36. Greenleaf, *Trustees as Servants*, pp. 26 ff.

I disagree. The chairman of colleges and universities can and should play so strategic a role that it would be a mistake to lose his independent contribution. The institution needs a chairman to whom friend and foe can turn with their concerns, and who by his position and performance commands the respect of campus and community. The president needs a chairman to whom he can readily turn for sound advice and understanding support. The board's responsibility to assess the performance of the administration makes it inappropriate for the president to be the chief officer of the board. Furthermore, since the president is the chief spokesman for new programs and the chief defender of established ones, he is in a far better position to argue his case if he is not also presiding over the discussion.

Unless the president maintains good relations with the rest of the board, however, the support of the chairman can become a divisive factor. So can the gradual development of a proprietary attitude on the part of the chairman. The special position of authority, the inside knowledge, the intimate relation with the president have been known to produce this effect. Along with it often goes a tendency to intervene in the administration of the college or university.³⁶ These are

reads well, but will it work? Such a full-time professional will almost inevitably slip over into administration, and the institution will end up with two full-time top administrators, as is now the case with Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Greenleaf further recommends that a professional staff be provided for trustees. How else, he argues, can they be expected to get the information they need? Citing the example of the use of outside auditors to review the institution's financial operations, he suggests that staff independent of the administration may be necessary to provide an adequate audit of its educational and administrative operations. This is a delicate point, for it raises questions of cost, of the competence of the "outside" staff, and of the relationship of trust between the administration and the board. On the other hand, we have already noted the need for independent sources of information for trustees, and some staff assistance will be necessary. One first step would be an extension of the duties of an administrative officer — either an assistant to the president or a secretary of the university, whose function it would be to provide trustees with orderly reports and such other information as they might desire. Such a person would

be particularly useful to the chairman.

H. Role of the president. An harmonious relation between the board and the president is essential to effectiveness. It should be obvious why this must be so. In commenting on the extent to which various factors operate in the process of decision-making, by far the largest number of respondents in the RTI survey (78% of the trustees and 91% of the presidents) indicated that the recommendations of the institution's chief administrative officer influenced decisions "to a considerable extent." Nor were there any significant variations by type of institution. In responding to the twelve criteria of board effectiveness, *two-thirds of the trustees and presidents*, again the highest frequency, rated their boards as excellent in "the effective working relationship between the board and the president or chancellor and his staff."³⁷

But an effective working relationship is a delicate matter. There are standard jokes about the impossible combination of personal qualities demanded or hoped for by boards when looking for new presidents. Since no one is perfect, presidents and boards must learn to supplement one another's deficiencies. If the president proves to be simply inadequate, the board has little option but to get rid of him and find a better successor. At the other end of the spectrum lies another and subtle danger. Some presidents prove to be so strong-minded and dominant that they reduce the trustees to

boards.³⁸ Any experienced and successful president knows that one of his major functions is to keep his trustees constantly and fully informed. He is both servant to and educator of the board.

Along with the chairman he carries the main responsibility for the indoctrination of new board members. He and his staff must provide new members with some sort of notebook or manual containing the background information they need to have about their duties as trustees and about the operations of the university. Not only his effectiveness, but also that of the board will depend on how well he fulfills his role as educator.

Conversely, as we have seen, the board has a responsibility to work with the president, to help him develop the kind of administrative setup which will compensate for his own weaknesses, and, by giving him full support, to strengthen and maintain his authority. Full support does not mean uncritical support, but it does entail public as well as private loyalty. In the RTI survey presidents were asked to indicate how helpful the members of their boards had been in each of several areas. Three-fourths responded that trustees had been very helpful in both personal support and in providing firm policy decisions when needed. Between 30% and 40% had been very helpful in interpreting policies and programs to the general public and in defending the president or the institution or both against attacks.

37. Here some differences show up among the types of institution. For example, both state college trustees and presidents rate their institutions lower than the average, and the black college presidents rate theirs distinctly lower. Both trustees and presidents of the private colleges think their working relations are excellent, as do the presidents of the community and junior colleges.

38. It is interesting to note that trustees in responding to the open-ended question in the RTI survey, "What quality of your institution's president is most valuable with regard to the functioning of the board?" listed his ability to communicate with the board as most valuable, organizational skill as second, and leadership as third.

39. The trustees of the public institutions were more critical of the presidents' capacity to communicate, whereas the presidents of universities, both public and private, judged their capacity more favorably. Their responses concerning factors which would improve board performance are consistent with these variations.

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rubber stamps, unable and ultimately unwilling to challenge any presidential decisions.³⁹ This is not a formula for the most effective operation.

The president has been the major and in many instances the only source of information about the institution for trustees. If boards are going to hold administrations properly accountable, then the president should not be the only source. He must, however, continue to be the major educator of his trustees with respect to the problems of the college or university and what is happening within the various sectors of the campus. Communication heads the list of presidential qualities most useful to the functioning of the board. When asked about factors adversely affecting the functioning of boards, one-third of the respondents to the RTI survey selected the failure of the president to communicate effectively on some issue, and 36% of the trustees thought that the inadequacy of information and background materials prior to board meetings had had an adverse effect to a considerable or moderate extent. Approximately one-fourth of the responding trustees and presidents considered that more systematic reporting by administrative officers and departmental chairmen would improve the operations of the

I. Open versus closed meetings. Most private organizations and many public agencies as well have been accustomed to conducting their meetings in private. The advantages of privacy for the discussions of delicate or controversial issues are very great, and the trustees of private colleges and universities have been loath to give them up. According to the Indiana University survey only 25% of private college and university boards permit those not directly involved with board business to sit in on their meetings. This study was made in 1968; it may well be that a higher percentage have now opened their meetings.

According to the same study 89% of the board meetings of public institutions are open. In the light of recent "sunshine laws" that figure, too, may now be higher. Some states make provision for executive sessions at which confidential or sensitive matters can be discussed in private. In others regents or trustees are free to lunch together, to talk on the telephone, or to compare views while playing golf. President Fleming of the University of Michigan in the essay already referred to says: "It is no more possible to keep board members from communicating with one another outside the formal meetings than it is to keep board members from

thinking privately about how they think a given issue ought to come out."⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the laws in some states are so strict that private meetings where some tentative agreement might be reached are being challenged. And yet the public discussion of future property purchases could easily lead to an escalation in price; the investigation of some alleged irregularity could result in a quite unjustified defamation of character; the discussion of the relative merits of various presidential candidates in the public press might cause the best of them to withdraw from consideration.

We need to recognize, however, that the old era of secrecy in academic councils is being challenged. The changes in college and university population, expectations and attitudes, discussed in an earlier section of this report, are destroying the old pattern. The democratic and egalitarian pressures on governance are part of the new outlook. If real power over policy decisions gravitates to college councils or university senates, it will not make much difference whether governing boards, so called, hold their meetings in public or in private. But if governing boards exercise real influence over issues affecting faculty, students, townspeople, taxpayers, it is going to be increasingly difficult to exclude these interested groups from the councils where their interests are being decided. This does not mean that they become members, but that board members become aware of them. It means listening to their

responsibilities required by social and educational patterns in transition. The discharge of these responsibilities will require within the board three levels of knowledge and understanding. The first is better knowledge about the institution and academic values by all trustees. The second is more knowledge by some trustees of the trends in higher education. The third, limited in all probability to a few trustees, is an awareness of the currents of change in society at large, currents which will ultimately affect the course of higher education.

For the first six decades of this century trustees were primarily concerned with long range plans and with questions of finance and plant.⁴¹ The disturbances of the 1960s focused attention on student behavior. As trustees sought to understand the phenomenon, they found themselves examining problems of admission, of the curriculum, of instruction, and of the stance of the institution regarding the social and moral issues of a nation more deeply divided than at any time since the Civil War. These were the foci of student complaints and unrest. At the same time state legislators, federal agencies, the tax-paying public were demanding accountability in terms of costs and programs. The age of innocence was over. As faculty, students, industry, legislature and federal government struggle to shape the university to fit their philosophies, trustees will need to know their institutions in far greater detail than



40. Fleming, "Governing Boards in Major Public Universities," (xeroxed), pp. 9-10.

41. In his report on the Hartnett-Rauh survey conducted by ETS in 1968, Hartnett lists 20 academic or educational areas where policy decisions need to be made. The data indicate those areas in which trustees consider that they make decisions, those in which they either advise or confirm, and those in which they are not involved. See *College and University Trustees*, pp. 45-7.

42. For what one can make of it, fewer presidents of state colleges and universities (10% and 13% respectively) and fewer trustees of the private junior colleges (14%) rated their boards as excellent, whereas a higher percentage (29%) of the presidents of private universities did so.

views. It could mean allowing them to speak at board meetings. It certainly means letting them listen while decisions are being made.

This is one more aspect of legitimacy. What is secret is suspect. When one is exposed to the complexity of a problem, one tends to have more sympathy with those struggling to find a reasonable solution. Those institutions which have recently experimented with open meetings have in general found the results less awkward than anticipated. There are, however, dangers of misinterpretation or misquotation, dangers of interference and obstruction. There is the danger that full and honest discussion may be inhibited and that decisions will be based on their popularity rather than on their merit. Open meetings are a mixed bag. Some day the pendulum may swing back, but for the present we had better learn to defend our positions largely naked to the world.

J. Knowledgeability. The effectiveness of governing boards will depend in part on the mechanics of their operations, which we have just been reviewing; in part on their legitimacy, which will be a function of their composition and of the methods of selection; in part on the readiness of individual members to accept the

ever before.

The findings of the RTI survey are ambiguous on this score. Trustees and presidents were asked to rate the effectiveness of their boards (excellent, good, fair, poor) on each of 12 items, of which one was knowledgeability "about the institution, its place in the higher education system, and in the currents of society affecting higher education." The smallest percentage of trustees and presidents (20% for each) rated their boards as excellent on this dimension; and if we take the combined count of those responding excellent or good, then only board effectiveness in providing or getting financial support gets fewer high marks.⁴²

In the light of this assessment how is one to interpret the rather cautious and restrained responses to certain other questions? When asked about changes that would improve the functioning of their governing boards, only 40% of the trustees and 37% of the presidents thought better orientation of board members to the institution would be helpful. When asked to rate the value of additional information about the institution, approximately one-third of both trustees and presidents thought that information on such areas as budgeting, financial management, personnel manage-

ment, faculty on tenure, minority students, governance procedures, and the like would be extremely valuable and about one-fifth thought it would be of limited value.

The criterion of knowledgeable covers all three areas of knowledge identified at the beginning of this section. It might be speculated, therefore, that the low percentage of trustees and presidents giving this factor a rating of excellent reflects the conviction that trustees are not knowledgeable about the broader issues of education and society rather than about the problems of their own institutions. This interpretation is supported in part by certain correlations to be found in the RTI data. "Where trustees felt they operated with first-hand knowledge of the situation, they tended markedly to rate their effectiveness highly," writes Davis in his report; and in a table on the relationship between board effectiveness and changes in board functioning thought to be desirable, those trustees and presidents who judged that a better orientation of trustees to the institution would be desirable tended to be those trustees and presidents who judged their boards to be less effective.⁴³

Nevertheless, one is left with an uncomfortable feeling. Insofar as the figures accurately reflect the opinions and attitudes of trustees, they reveal too wide a gap between the need for better institutional knowledge and the recognition of that need. Roughly 80% of

admissions and universities without walls, to the demise of *in loco parentis*, to the new respectability of temporary drop-outs, and to the resurgence of a concern for teaching. Consortia of private institutions, statewide systems for public institutions, state coordinating councils for both mark the end of the era of rugged institutional individualism. The effective board is one that can see its institution within the framework of national trends.

Thirty-eight percent of the trustees in the RTI survey reported that greater contact with knowledgeable members of other boards would improve the local board performance. When the presidents were asked how much influence various factors did have in the selection of new trustees, only 13% (the lowest figure for any of the factors) thought that knowledgeability on the issues of higher education had been an important factor, whereas 53% (third highest out of ten factors) thought that it should be considered of central importance. Oddly enough, fewer presidents of private colleges and universities as well as of state colleges made this judgment than did the average for all types of institutions.

When asked about the value of additional information regarding issues in higher education such as national trends, curricular innovations, good governance procedures, and ways of coping with legal challenges, the pattern of response with two exceptions was very

43. Davis, *Effective College and University Board*, pp. 49, 53.

44. For a series of specific areas of trustee information about their institutions, see Ruml and Morrison, *Memo to a College Trustee*, Part 5.

45. Hartnett, *College and University Trustees*, pp. 42-3. See also the tables on pp. 68-9. Since *AGB Reports* is distributed to the trustees of AGB member institutions, since membership in 1968 was considerably less than today, and since the ETS survey included members and non-members, the percentage of trustees now reading *AGB Reports* is undoubtedly much higher.

the respondents thought that additional information would be extremely valuable or of some value. This suggests that it is not a question of adequate information being available but not assimilated. Whether the available information is adequate or more needs to be provided, trustees must raise their sights regarding the knowledge they should have about the institutions which they hold in trust.⁴⁴

All trustees, to discharge their trusteeship, must be familiar with what goes on in their own institutions; but not all trustees can be expected to keep up with the shifting currents and eddies of higher education in general. If the thesis set forth in the first part of this report has any validity, it follows that some trustees must be aware of what is happening elsewhere. Colleges and universities are increasingly tied into an interlocking network where developments on one campus create reverberations on many others and where decisions taken in state capitals and in Washington can change the course of higher education. Think back to the civil rights movement of the early '60s, to the demonstrations against the Vietnam war culminating in the peace strike across the country in May of 1970, to the growth of black studies and of urban studies to open

similar to that for additional information regarding the local institution. Presidents by slightly higher percentages than trustees favored more local information; trustees by slightly higher percentages favored more general educational knowledge. The second difference came in the rating given to problems similar institutions are facing and what they are doing about them. Here 61% of the trustees and 58% of the presidents replied that such information would be extremely valuable.

These data need to be set beside the appalling findings of Hartnett and Rauh in their 1968 survey. In his report Hartnett summarizes their sorry results: "In terms of books, for example, only Ruml and Morrison's *Memo to a College Trustee* — a book now some nine years old — has been read completely by more than 10 percent of the trustees. In fact, of the 15 books listed, only four have been completely read by more than five percent of the trustees, and in most cases, the trustees have never even heard of the books, most of which are now regarded as 'classics' in the higher education field."⁴⁵ The same was found true for a list of 11 periodicals where the two most popular were the *EPE Fifteen Minute Report for College and University Trustees* and *AGB Reports*. The former was read occasionally or regu-

larly by 30%, and the latter by 14%.

In the RTI survey trustees and presidents were asked to indicate which, if any, of a series of activities provided by a service organization would be attractive as a means of providing needed information or experience. "Brief and to-the-point reports for trustees and presidents" were the most popular, being favored by 48% of the trustees and 66% of the presidents. Workshops and forums were found attractive by 35% to 43%; suggested readings, commissioned papers by outstanding specialists, national research programs on topics of concern to trustees, and the provision of consultants on trustee problems were viewed as very attractive by approximately 25% of the respondents.

One cannot conclude from these figures that trustees are not informed about national trends in education (though it will be recalled that only 20% of the trustees and presidents thought that their boards deserved the highest rating for knowledgeability) or are not prepared to become informed about them, but the evidence is not very encouraging. Trustees, it may be argued, are busy men and women, and it is unreasonable to expect them to do much reading in the field of education. To that it can only be replied: if more and better knowledge is essential to the fulfillment of trustee responsibilities, then it is reasonable to expect them to do their homework or to yield their place to those who will.

seen the significance of the relations of chairman to members, of chairman and president to one another, of president to board, and of committee structure. Boards function as organisms the separate members of which have a symbiotic relationship to one another.

One indication of board morale is the quality of debate over issues. One school of thought favors early unanimity among members. Divided counsels, so the argument runs, weaken an institution; unanimous decisions are clear and strong. But unanimity, as we saw earlier, may be the reflection of too homogeneous a board. Differences of opinion and vigorous debate may be indicative of a stronger and more effective board—at least up to a point. Substantial consensus after discussion is desirable; too many narrowly split decisions can be destructive of board effectiveness.

In the RTI survey 41% of the trustees and 34% of the presidents identified active and vigorous debate at board meetings as an important factor in reaching decisions, and in general there was a strong correlation between those taking this position and those giving their boards the highest rating of effectiveness.⁴⁶

Another indicator of board morale is the degree of rapport felt by the members. This is quite consistent with differences of opinion and vigorous debate over issues. But symbiosis can be negative as well as positive. Eighteen percent of the trustees and 29% of the presidents responding to the RTI questionnaire re-



46. Bean, "The Liberal Arts College Trustee," (xeroxed), pp. 9-14.

47. Bowen and Bailey, *Effective Use of Resources*, pp. 3-20.

48. Some interesting differences show up in the responses of representatives of different types of institution. Sixty percent of the junior college presidents and 71% of the black college presidents checked this factor as a major importance. On the other hand, only a quarter of the presidents of community colleges, state universities, private colleges and private universities voted the same way, and only one-third of the private university trustees (as against two-fifths of all trustees)

thought active and vigorous debate to be a major factor in arriving at decisions. Roughly one-third of the trustees and presidents reported that difficulty in achieving resolution of a problem acceptable to all members adversely affected board operations to a considerable or moderate extent. On the factor of strong and irreconcilable differences of opinion within the board 15% of the trustees and 20% of the presidents found this to have an adverse effect to the same extent.

Apparently it is a more serious factor for community college trustees (31%) and of much less importance to the presidents of private universities (4%) and black colleges (12%).

The third level of knowledgeability, which can be expected of only the wisest of the trustees, has to do with the changes in social patterns and attitudes. There need to be a few "futurists" on any board, people who are sensitive to under-currents which will some day surface, or who can see in broad perspective what the rest of us miss because of the trees. Atherton Bean suggests some of these changing aspects of society in his essay already referred to.⁴⁶ They form the premises for the arguments in several of the chapters of *The University as an Organization* and in the Winter 1970 issue of *Daedalus* entitled "The Embattled University." Or take a look at the skillful application of changing social concepts to educational problems in Howard Bowen's "The Effective Use of Financial Resources."⁴⁷ It is encouraging to note that in the RTI survey 31% of the trustees and 34% of the presidents thought that more information about and understanding of trends in contemporary society would improve the effectiveness of their governing boards. Amen.

K. Board morale. A governing board is not just a collection of people; it is a group of individuals working together for certain common ends. The whole is greater than the sum of its individual parts. We have

ported one or more obstructionist members to be a significant adverse factor. Public institutions apparently find this a more serious problem than private colleges and universities, although judgments differ between presidents and trustees according to the type of institution.

A sense of achievement, of competence to deal with the problems of the institution, of strength to resist encroachment by outside groups, these are what make up board morale, and good morale is a major ingredient in board effectiveness. It grows on itself. Good boards tend to get better; poor boards continue to limp. It takes something like a convulsion to reform the latter, but once morale is restored, the board is on its way to greater effectiveness. ■

The business of being a trustee makes extraordinary demands on the men and women who serve in that capacity. No one has ever taken a complete census of trustees, but a few calculations indicate that there are approximately 35,000 in this country. In view of the demands on time, energy and wise counsel, why are so many people willing to serve?

If one is an alumnus of the college or an active member of the church to which the college is related, there is the strong pull of loyalty or affection or both. For most trustees prestige is a significant element. There is pleasure in being on the inside, in the know, and in being associated with people whom one respects. In our society we think of trustees as important people, sometimes as powerful ones; and the more prestigious the institution, the greater is the personal satisfaction.

There are, however, other reasons less centered in self. It is good to be identified with something bigger than oneself. Most people are concerned for the public good and are willing to serve it at some personal sacrifice. There is an exhilaration in coping constructively with others in solving difficult problems, of which education currently is providing its full share.¹ When one sees the magnificent contribution made by the best trustees, one is reminded of William James' statement that the great purpose of a life is to spend it for something that outlasts it.

1. See the interesting brief statement by Irene duPont May, "Trusteeship: My Reasons for Serving," *AGB Reports*, Vol. 12, No. 7 (April 1970), pp. 29-31.

2. Alfred North Whitehead, *Aims of Education* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1959).

3. From an unpublished letter to The Honorable Charles E. Wyzanski, Jr., Senior District Judge in the U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts.

CONCLUSION 39

Ultimately one comes face to face with the prospects for the future of our society. What hope we have lies in education. "Any serious fundamental change in the intellectual outlook of human society," wrote Whitehead, "must necessarily be followed by an educational revolution."² We know — without fully understanding the significance of what is happening — that our society has been undergoing profound changes. Early in this report I tried to sketch some of the dimensions of the educational revolution which has resulted. Our only chance of shaping and preserving viable human communities rests with our educational systems, and they in turn depend upon the leadership they can attract. To be a trustee is to engage in the most imaginative and far-sighted form of self-interest.

To some this may seem an exaggerated role. Each trustee of each institution, of whatever size or stature, is in a position to make a significant contribution. "However a man feels about his work," wrote the late Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes almost forty years ago, "nature is likely to see to it that his business becomes his master and an end in itself, so that he may find that he has been a martyr under the illusion of self seeking. But we rank men partly at least by the nature of their

dominant interest, and we think more highly of those who are conscious of ulterior ends — be those ends intellectual ideals, to see the universal in the particular, or the sympathetic wish to help their kind. For your sake I hope that when your work seems to present only mean details you may realize that every detail has the mystery of the universe behind it and may keep up your heart with an undying faith."³

Education is a continuing act of faith.

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